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# RUSSIAN AND NOMAD









ZAKIR BEK, THE HUNTER

# RUSSIAN AND NOMAD

TALES OF THE KIRGHIZ STEPPES

BY  
E. NELSON FELL

ILLUSTRATED



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TO

ANNE, THE BAIBSHA,  
MARIAN, }  
OLIVIA, } THE KIZIMKAS,  
NELSON, THE BAIDAN BALA,

WHO SHARED THESE ADVENTURES, THIS  
BOOK IS DEDICATED, BY THE AUTHOR.



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## INTRODUCTION

THE scene of the tales which follow is laid in the Kirghiz Steppes, part of the central Asiatic plateau, which is the ultimate birthplace of all our western modes of thought and culture and religion.

About fifty years ago this part of the world came under the sway of the Russian Empire, and an especial district was organized, comprising three governments, known as the governments of Akmolinsk (the white burial grounds), Semipalatinsk (the seven tents) and Semiretchinsk (the seven rivers); the whole placed under the supreme control of the "Governor-General of the Steppes." Roughly, the region, which is covered by the authority of this high official, is enclosed within the following boundaries: on the north, the Siberian Railway; on the east, the river Irtysh; on the south, the governments of the Turkestans; on the west, the governments of Orenburg and Turgai.

As its title implies, the governmental system is military in form, and its political organization and its laws differ materially from those of the regular civil governments, as normally organized in the European division of the Empire.

From 1902 till 1908 the writer was directing the operations of a London mining company, which, in 1903, purchased some copper mines, coal mines and smelting works in the centre of the Steppes, near the headwaters of the river Ishim, two hundred miles or more north of Lake Balkhash.

With new capital the mines and works were developed into an important and successful enterprise, employing a small army of men; Kirghiz carriers, miners and labourers; Russian mechanics, engineers, superintendents, accountants. The number of foreigners employed was very small and, both by policy and inclination, we endeavoured to work in close and sympathetic harmony with the Russians themselves, and the Russian organized system. In this way we came into close contact with numerous and large classes of Russians with whom the ordinary visitor is not usually familiar; the Tchinovnik in his official capacity, the peasant, the Cossack, the mechanic, the engineer, together with a small sprinkling of the "intelligentsia," that is, men with a university training.

The period of the writer's connection with the works covered the period of the Russo-Japanese War, simultaneously with which, possibly in con-

sequence of which, the whole internal organization of the Russian Empire was exposed to a strain, which might almost be dignified by the name of revolution.

Before the coming of the Russians this vast stretch of country was inhabited, or more properly speaking roamed over, by the largest branch of the Kirghiz race, calling themselves Kazáks, of Turkish - Mongolian origin. The word Kazák means "a rider," and the Russians had already adopted this word for their own group or organization (which amounts almost to a caste, so close it is) which we know under the name of "Cossack"; so when they absorbed the Kirghiz Kazáks into their body politic, in order to avoid the confusion of terms, they abandoned the use of the word Kazák, when referring to the native race, and use, simply, the word "Kirghiz." The natives have retained the word and never speak of themselves otherwise than as "Kazáks," but, in the following stories, the Russian style is adopted and they are referred to exclusively as "Kirghiz."

Along the northern limits of the Kirghiz Steppes, the Siberian Railway runs in an east and westerly direction. Three towns mark the course of the railway: at the northwest corner, the town of Kourgan; in the centre, the city of Petropavlovsk (where the railway crosses the river Ishim); at the northeast corner, the city of Omsk, where the railway crosses the river Irtysh,

Along the railway, the land is gently undulating and is, agriculturally speaking, good land. It is treeless, except for islands of birch trees, scattered irregularly through it, some large, some small. The timber itself is seldom large but diversifies the landscape very agreeably. Whether seen in the spring, with their delicate green leaves shivering in the breeze, or in the winter, when the snow is on the ground, with the silver bark and the delicate tracery of the boughs shining in the red light of the setting sun, the birch glades seem to offer a home of enchantment, in which the Dryads of one's fancy can appropriately dance and play. And if you will wander through these glades, you will find that your fancy is fact; and you will see them madly revelling amid the fluttering boughs and the rustling leaves and the swirling snow.

Besides the Dryads, who had preëmpted this district countless generations ago, there is practically no settlement at all. If the post road and the telegraph line did not beckon you forward, you would think you had arrived at the end of everything. But as your carriage follows the slender thread, you are reassured by seeing, every twenty or twenty-five versts, the Government post house; a square four-room log house, built, but well built, with an axe. It is surrounded with a compound for the horses. On a board outside is painted in black and white the imperial

eagle, the name of the station, the distance in versts from the preceding station and the distance to the next.

Each post-house keeper is required to keep a definite number of horses and to hire them to travellers at fixed rates. He is also required to furnish provisions at fixed prices, all of which are extraordinarily low. As a matter of fact, the traveller, who is not a Tchinovnik (Government official), will usually find it advisable to offer about double the official rate; even then he will not pay an extravagant price. If he is not willing to be so "imposed upon," he is likely to find his rate of progress seriously impaired.

It is naturally to be supposed that the traveller's comfort and convenience largely depend upon the amiability of the post-house keeper; and as is quite natural, some are good and some are bad. The student of human nature, especially if he be a believer in the improvement of mankind through material progress, will note with pained interest that, as he recedes from the railway, the post-masters become increasingly amiable and obliging; but that, as he approaches it, they become more and more unaccommodating and surly.

On the whole the service is satisfactory and efficient, and the traveller may feel grateful that it is as good as it is, when conditions are considered.

Villages occur at rare intervals; some settled



by peasants, others by Cossacks; the two classes are not mixed. The Cossack system of land tenure is interwoven with the privileges and obligations of their caste. These are passed down from father to son. If a Cossack wishes, he can de-Cossack himself, but this is not often done. They are proud of their position and their caste.

The peasant is in a class by himself, rigidly defined by law; once a peasant always a peasant. He is one of a community of which the members own their lands in common. Each man has the use of a certain plot of land for a few years and he then exchanges plots with someone else. It is a deadening system from a good-farming point of view. Under it, the land is doomed to inevitable impoverishment; and until the system is changed, there seems to be little hope for the peasant, in spite of the fatherly solicitude with which he is treated by the Imperial Government.

The peasants are under the direct supervision and control of a special officer who, in the Steppes, goes by the title of Krestyansky Natchalnik (peasant official).

The Cossacks are more nearly self-governing and independent, and are proportionately better developed and better off.

The farther south you go, the fewer villages there are; meaning both Cossack stanitsas (the term for the Cossack village organization) and posioloks (the term used for the village of the

peasant). Before our company took possession of the mines, there were none within a hundred and fifty miles of our works. Six years later, the Government had made provision for the settlement of twenty-five or thirty thousand peasants in the best river bottoms, in the neighbourhood of the works. Villages were laid out and settled with Little Russians from the congested districts of southwest Russia, Poltava, Kharkov and Kief. The Government carried them two thousand versts for five dollars per head; gave them the land, fifty dollars each in cash, timber for their houses, agricultural machinery and seed wheat. Our works were chosen as a centre point, for it was hoped that the peasants would always be able to find work there in case of need. Our mines were the outpost of what the West, in its childish glee, calls civilization. Beyond us, the nomad Kirghiz held undisputed sway. Already the intrusion of the Russian agriculturist into the region, which the Kirghiz considered their own, was causing the latter anxiety. Fortunately for them, they and their flocks and herds can live where agricultural man cannot. But it is hard for them to be expelled from their favourite pasture grounds by the new comers. It is the old conflict between the free range and the farm.

Southward the general level of the land rises, the hills become more numerous and there are frequent rocky ridges which can almost be digni-

fied by the name of mountains. They look more imposing than they are, for their outlines are rugged and abrupt. This country has not experienced the destructive erosion of ice and the erosion by water is very slight, hence the outline of the hills is jagged and sharp, like a piece of broken glass.

The country is far too stern and unfriendly for the charming Dryads of the birch forests, and there is no timber; a low bush known as karagand, a few stunted cedars and junipers; nothing more.

Slates, sandstones, conglomerates and limestones are the prevailing rocks, with occasional islands of granite, some of them very large, covering hundreds of square miles. The large granite areas are covered with serviceable pine timber. Though they are of the utmost importance on this account, they are not large enough or frequent enough to affect the general description of the Steppes as given above.

The Steppes are indifferently watered. The rivers are few and seem easily discouraged. Many of them run for some miles and then disappear. Some man once sang (not having a very wide area of observation) that streams "flow on forever." That is precisely what the Steppes streams do not do. Sometimes they flow, sometimes they don't. Most of them grow tired of their thirsty journey through the hot sand, abandon the struggle, and die.

Lakes are numerous, but often brackish and sometimes very salt. Some are so salt that a massive incrustation of brine is thrown up at the water's edge. Each year, as this is carried off for commercial purposes, the lake throws up another deposit. In certain places the salt is an important industry. There are springs, but not many, and the good ones are very rare, even the best is only a small trickle, but it is cold and clean and gushes from a rock and cannot be trodden into mud by the cattle. When you have been starving for days on brackish water and the sun is burning hot, then you know the value of such a spring.

There is no beauty in such a country which can be described, but there is a beauty which can be felt, as I have tried to show in some of the stories which follow. I have usually spoken of it as "the desert," and though it is not the desert of shifting sands that we all know, I think the word describes it better than any other. Certainly it describes fairly well that portion of the Steppes which forms the frame for these stories; the land farther south is even more arid and unproductive and desert-like.

The climate is severe; extremely hot and dry in the four months of summer, and extremely cold and stormy in the seven months of winter. The blizzards (Bouran) compare favourably with the fancy variety which we have on the prairies of

the North American continent. The thermometer sinks to fifty-five or sixty below zero (Fahrenheit) and it does not hesitate to do this while the fiercest winds are blowing. Under these conditions it is unwise to venture out of doors. Even the Kirghiz suffer terribly if they are caught in such a storm, and their faces show the ravages of the furious icy winds, when they reach their haven. But wild as the storms are, I have never seen one which the camel, the great snow camel, cannot face.

The twelfth month of the year, the one month of spring, is nearly sufficient in delight to compensate for the severe extremes of the other eleven. The earth and sky reawake to such a glory of life and colour as are unknown to the dweller in more temperate climes. The song of the thousand skylarks which rise before your carriage, as you drive along in the early morning, chases away all remembrance of the wintry chains which have bound the earth so long.

Copper deposits are found over a wide area. The number and extent of them is extraordinary. The rich deposits have nearly all been worked to a shallow depth by a race preceding the Kirghiz. The ores are oxidized from the surface to a depth of about seventy feet, and a zone of secondary enrichment extends to three hundred feet. Some of these deposits are of such size and richness that it is possible that this district may some day be-

come a factor in the world's copper production. The deposits of low grade ore are innumerable and of large size. Unfortunately the ores are very siliceous, and for this and other reasons offer some difficulties of treatment. On the other hand, there are coal deposits of vast extent and they are often found side by side with the copper mines. The quality of the coal is not of the first class, but is a good quality of the second class. An interesting botanical feature is observable in connection with the copper deposits. At a certain time of the year a little pink flower appears in blossom, wherever there are signs of copper and nowhere else. Standing on a hill, these flowers could be observed in patches and wherever they were seen, copper signs were always found. I regret to say that nature did not carry the phenomenon a step farther and tinge the flower with a shade of pink corresponding with the contents of copper in the ore. She always stops short of making the solution of her problems too easy. The copper deposits usually occur in the sedimentary rocks. In the granite areas, gold is found and precious stones; such deposits are usually irregular and precarious.

On the whole, life in the remote Steppes is not too difficult, in spite of certain obvious drawbacks and offers a charm which is all its own. Our houses were built with massive stone walls and the very efficient Russian stove kept them effectively

warm and required little attention. Life in the cold prairies of the United States would be considerably simplified if our people were not the victims of cast and sheet iron stoves, but would adopt the Russian form of brick stove. With abundance of coal, no one at our mines suffered from cold, unless he were compelled to make a long journey in the bitter winter weather. When necessary, such journeys were a serious test of the traveller's patience and endurance.

The Russian people received us cordially and with great hospitality. We endeavoured to show our appreciation of their attitude by learning their language, and by attempting to enter into their ways of life and thought with whole-heartedness. We were repaid ten thousand fold. Their amiability is irresistible and their hearts are very warm. The simplicity and naturalness of their outlook upon life are refreshing, and reveal to you in startling outline the conventionalism in which you have been trained, and whose limitations you have never realized before. When talking to Russians you feel that this is a young race, and that the world is opening before it like a flower; you feel very much as you do when you are listening to the nascent intelligence of a youth. One of their most charming traits is an entire lack of self-consciousness. The simplest peasant will enter a room full of notables, and without hesitation, but with great dignity and self-respect,

address his remarks to the chief. He stands erect, he does not shift from foot to foot, his hands do not seek his pockets, he is not thinking of himself.

Rank is insisted on, nowhere more insisted on, than in Russia; but this is part of the machinery of law and order; humanly, each man feels himself on an equality with the next. You are Ivan Ivanovitch (John, the son of John) to the commonest workman and to your personal friend and to the governor-general, all alike, and so are they to you.

The women are a thing apart from the men; at table they prefer to sit together at one end, and the men at the other. There is not much sustained conversation at the women's end, but the man's end is a continual stream of talk. The woman's function is primarily to be the mother of the children, and secondarily, to care for the house; chiefly the kitchen; the rest of the house does not receive much care. The raising of children is, however, an art not well understood by the ordinary Russian woman. I was once talking to the mother of four living children, the youngest was a mere baby, the eldest was in the hospital seriously ill with fever. I asked her how the child was.

"Oh! very ill," she said.

"I hope not so seriously as you seem to think," I said.

"Oh, yes; she will surely die," she went on.



"Oh, do not be so discouraged, why do you say that?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know; I am sure she will die; I never can keep more than three alive at one time."

"Free Bogoo jiviom" (we live in the sight of God); what is destined, will be.

A very large proportion of the Russians at the works had come from Little Russia and I have no doubt that the life, as I saw it, was tinged with the colour of Little Russian manners and customs. The dancing, the music, the gaiety, the expansiveness were decidedly Little Russian in character. The few Great Russians who were at the works sometimes told me with regret that we were only meeting one half of the Russian people, and wished that their brethren from Great Russia were better represented. When considering the dwellers of an enormous territory like the Russian Empire it is necessary to remember that the people in different sections are likely to vary markedly in racial character.

Of the other race, the Kirghiz, the real Steppe dwellers, it is difficult to write with as sure a touch as of the Russians. Language, racial traits, religion and immemorial customs stand between you and them. Moreover, although we came into very close relations with thousands of them at the works, we realized that they only partially represented the sentiment of the real Kirghiz. Our labouring class was not, by any means, the aris-

tocracy of the race; that was out on the Steppes watching the flocks by day and night. Still, we lived with them for six years, as employers of the proletariat and as hosts and guests of the aristocracy; and some at least of our impressions should be worthy of record.

In the summer they lead a life of enchantment, for a few months of which most of us would barter our whole lives; in the winter they fly to the other extreme and lead a semi-underground existence of such physical discomfort, or even hardship, combined with odours of such nauseating quality, that you feel that the endurance of such conditions for twenty-four hours is impossible. The subterranean hovel contains one room, with one tiny window tightly sealed; the entry is through a large closed stable yard, full of horses, camels, goats and sheep. The yard itself is tightly covered in and closed on all sides and the only air the room receives is from this yard, through the rarely opened door. The building has a floor of dirt and walls of mud and has never been cleaned since it was built. The room is full of the acrid smoke of burning dung. Only a few rays of dull light pass through the single pane of window glass. Unless you had done it yourself, you would be prepared to deny that you could possibly eat food prepared under such conditions. There is not a single rule or principle of ventilation, heat, cold, cleanliness, sunlight or nutrition, which is not broken sixty

times in every hour of every day of the seven months in each year, by the Kirghiz. And yet the men are scrupulously clean about their persons, and if you are with them at night you will see them take off their sodden and worn outer coverings, and taking off layer after layer, they will gradually emerge in a spotless silk undergarment of a voluminous pyjama variety, and their skin is as fresh as the silk itself. At all times their personal habits are delightful; they do not drink or smoke or chew or spit; they would rather starve than eat their food, filthy as it may be, without first washing their hands. It is impossible for them to enter a tent or a house without removing their outer boots, inside of which they wear another pair of boots to the knee, but made of their soft gaily coloured and embroidered leather. This same habit of removing the outer shoes also belongs to the Russians, who have learned many of their customs from the Oriental races, with whom they are in such close contact. Anyonewho has ever acquired this habit in the East is shocked when he returns to the West and sees again the spectacle of persons walking into a house, with all the dirt and refuse of the street clinging to their boots.

If the Kirghiz has learnt his delightful personal habits from the teachings of Mahommed, I can only regret that our western religions have overlooked these details.

The youth of property is married, when still

young, to a girl older than himself, who is supposed to instruct him in the ways which he should follow; ten years later, when the youth is in his prime and the girl is already mature, he takes a second young wife, and the first wife takes the position of dowager. But she continues to occupy the principal post of honour in the tent and the young wife is subordinate. They rarely have more than two wives. They must be bought and paid for with horses or stock, and few can afford even two. If a man dies, his brother must marry his widow and adopt his children. Under this rule, the existence of widows and orphans is impossible. One of our coal tenders was a lad of sixteen, who had acquired a wife and four children under such circumstances; he groaned under the load but had to make the best of it. On the whole their social system seems to work well and does not lead to such frequent scandals as ours.

These stories are written in grateful memory of the pleasant years spent with these two races; each in its way so genial, so hospitable, so willing to give the best of itself whole-heartedly to the stranger; and in the hope that the reader may be induced to share the writer's affection for the great Russian people, which is now, for the first time, beginning to take its place in the family of westerly nations.

"The Turquoise Lake," and also "The Eagle's Song" which follows "A Hunt with Eagles" were written by my daughter Marian, one of the "Kizimkas."



# **RUSSIAN AND NOMAD**



# RUSSIAN AND NOMAD

## A SON OF THE STEPPES

"In the distance between two hills, lies  
the child of a hare;  
Do not despise, do not scorn all the  
children of the Kirghiz."

—*Kirghiz Poem.*

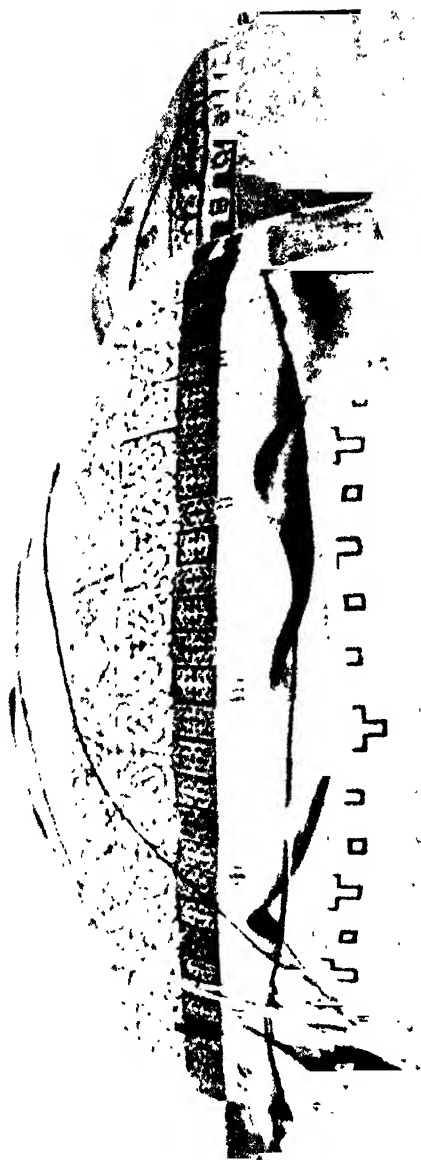
WE met him first at Bayan Aool on our way from Kooyandy Fair. The Russian annual Yarmarka or fair is a very venerable institution, and owes its existence to the times when railways and telegraphs and mails were not known. Different fairs have acquired special reputations. Of course, the fair at Nijni Novgorod (the "Lower Newtown" to distinguish it from the old "Newtown" near Petersburg) has always been the most celebrated of all, and was and is the great meeting place where the West meets the East, and trades and drinks tea and establishes unbelievably long credits; and at Nijni everything is sold from a camel to a mowing machine. Some towns have fairs every six months. The little town of Irbit, in north-western Siberia, is a dead village during eleven



months of the year, but, during the twelfth, it is packed with a miscellaneous population industriously engaged in buying and selling furs. It is the great market from which practically the entire fur crop of Siberia is distributed. On the one side are the hunters and trappers and small merchants, and on the other side the city men, largely Jews, of Moscow, Petersburg and Leipzig, one selling, the other buying.

The specialty at Kooyandy is live stock: cattle, sheep and horses, especially horses. Kooyandy lies on the margin of a large lake, whose shores are encrusted with brine thrown up by the waves. It is in the centre of a barren undulating plain, on the post road between Bayan Aool and Karkaralinsk, three or four hundred miles south of Omsk, a large town where the Siberian Railway crosses the river Irtysh. On the north and south, respectively, the great granite ranges of Bayan Aool and Karkaralinsk enclose the picture with jagged blue lines.

If you pass through Kooyandy at ordinary times of the year, you see a few large buildings, on which are painted the names of merchants and banks which have a familiar air; but all is deserted, the buildings closed, not a soul stirs. It looks as if it were dead and buried beyond hope. But come back again in the summer and you will be ready to confess that there are ways of doing things, which you have never dreamed of. For, once every year this square mile of desert blossoms into life, such an active, surging, mooing, bleating,



# KIRGHIZ TENTS AT KOORYANDY FAIR

Once a year the Governor-General puts up his snow-white tent



neighing life as has never entered your mind. For months before the Fair month, its influence has been felt for a thousand miles around; Sarts and Kirghiz have been gathering their herds and flocks in the South for their lonely journey across the "Hungry Steppes," a great barrier of salt and alkaline desert where no water is, and where there is no food or drink for man or beast. At the appointed time they all gather together at Kooyandy. The Imperial Bank opens its doors, the great merchants of Pavlodar and Semipalatinsk and Omsk fill their stores with every kind of ware; the Governor General of the Steppes puts up his huge snow-white Kirghiz tent or Yurta, and comes down from Omsk with his suite and holds high court with his special corps of magistrates and police. The empty desert has suddenly blossomed into a full-blown town.

On our way to the fair we passed through Bayan Aool, a Cossack village, lying at the foot of a massive range of granite. These Cossack villages are all alike. The houses are built of logs, neatly put together and carefully chinked with mortar, the window frames usually decorated with ornamental scroll work painted white; the roofs are of iron painted green. Each house is within its own compound. The church stands on a hill on the highest ground in the town, always snowy white, with several domes shaped like onions, usually green but sometimes blue, sometimes dotted with golden stars; on the principal dome

stands the cross. The town is encircled with a cordon of wind-mills where the staple food of the villagers is ground. The Russian has a positive passion for growing wheat, and no wonder; for the happiness of their lives for the next year depends upon the success of the harvest. Whole wheat bread, milk, tea and fish form the diet on which they live; if the wheat crop fails the village is plunged in misery during the following year; for money is very scarce and it costs money to bring in wheat from the outside. Besides, money is needed for vodka.

The weather had been bad for some time, the roads through the mountains were almost impassable and we were glad to stop for the night at the house of our Cossack friend Ivan Feodorovitch Razmuzzin. The huge wooden door of the compound creaked and our tired horses were as glad as we were—to drop for a few hours the struggle with the awful roads. When you are tired, a good Cossack house is about as pleasant a place to come to as you can wish. The whole house is spotlessly clean, one room is always reserved for guests; the bed is a four-poster, covered with snow-white linen; the windows are full of exotic plants, oleanders, plumbago and geraniums; the walls are covered with framed prints which are of two kinds, one being pictures of the Russo-Japanese war of a most bloody cast, and the other being scenes from the lives of the Saints, Nicolai, Sergei

and others; in the corner opposite the door, as you come in, is the ikon before which, if it is a holiday, a small hanging lamp is burning.

The next morning, rain was still falling and the streets were full of travellers to and from the fair. The black mud was thicker than ever. Our road ran down to a small stream and into it we plunged—and stuck. The drivers yelled and lashed the horses, the horses plunged and reared and fell down and did everything except move the heavy carriage. It looked quite hopeless. Then another carriage drove up and the drivers took out two of their horses and, with wonderful contrivances of camel's-hair rope and rawhide, tied their horses one to the end of each of our shafts and, jumping on their backs, urged them forward. So now we had five plunging horses struggling in the mud and water; still the carriage refused to budge. Then four well-mounted Kirghiz rode up and went through a manœuvre of an original kind. They were riding beautiful horses with long tails almost sweeping the ground. Two came on each side of our carriage, one at each axle (which in the Russian carriage has a hook at the end of it). They leaned over their horses and tied, each one the tail of his horse, to the axle, and then all the nine horses were urged by very loud noise and much whipping and spurring, to do their best. For a few minutes it was a wild scene of splashing, plunging horses. Every minute I expected to

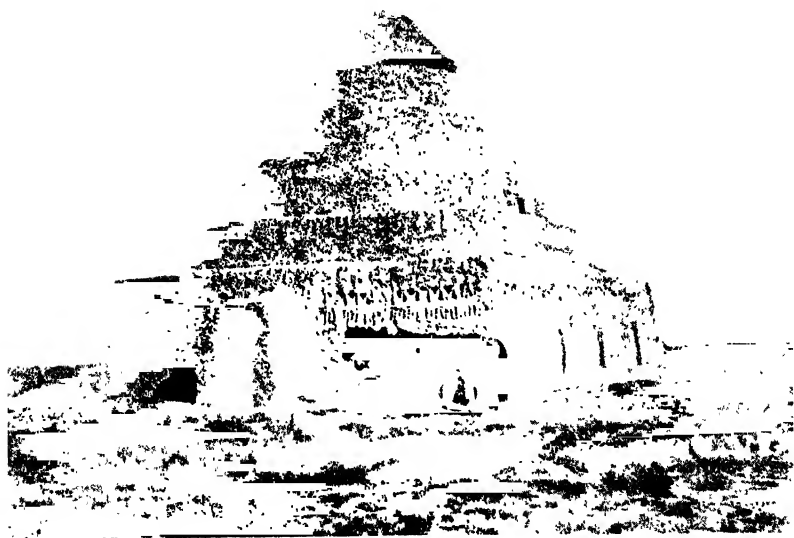
see the tail pulled out of some poor horse, but, somehow they all held fast, the carriage creaked and moved and we were safely landed on the opposite bank. The horsemen unknotted their horses' tails and the leader said, "I am the Volostnoi Oopravitel (magistrate) of Kisil Kool, my name is Aboobakir Koorman, kaida bourassin?" (where are you going?) So our friendship began, and before we parted we became fast friends and we promised to go and spend some days with him at his tent village or Aool, on the shores of Lake Djusali.

So, one fine spring morning, we started in our Korobok or basket (literally, a large basket carried on boards, buckboard fashion, between the wheels) drawn by our three beautiful piebalds, and left the road for the open Steppe.

The beauty of the Steppes is a beauty which fills the heart and masters the mind. The appeal is not made to the eye and the senses. There are no charming nooks and valleys, no mighty mountain peaks with forest-clad foot-hills and ice-capped summits, no sheltered lakes, no tamed charm of valley which man has fenced in and turned into a little corner of Paradise. It is true that there is a beauty of detail; acres of anemones which burst into blossom in the spring, wild roses which cover the hillsides a little later, and especially the wonderful colours in which the whole atmosphere seems bathed; but the real



INTERIOR OF MOGHILA



MOGHILA SARUM SAKTI  
The tomb of the yellow reeds

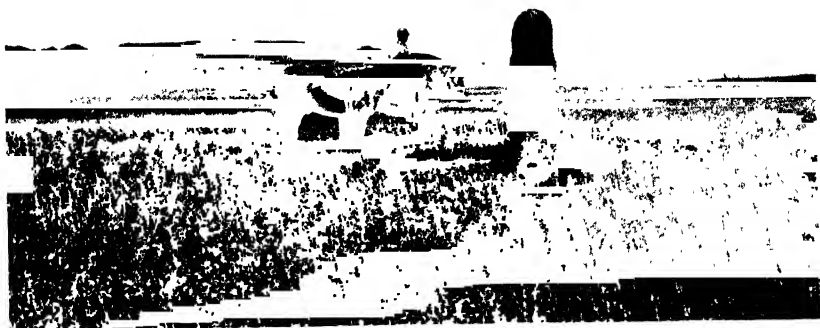




beauty is the limitless expanse which little by little feeds the mind with a sense of universal harmony.

This is the oldest country in the world, the country which has been the longest settled by civilized man. Yet man has here left only the most shadowy traces of himself—and the men who are living here now are leaving still less for the future. If civilization means the desire of man to leave a record of himself for posterity, the desire to leave such an inheritance of knowledge that his children will advance farther than he has gone, the desire of man to lift himself out of and distinguish himself from the rest of nature, the desire of knowledge of good and evil, then the native inhabitants of the Kirghiz Steppes cannot be considered civilized; but if civilization means a kindly heart, a power of self-restraint carried to the last degree, a sense of the dignity of man as superior to but not set apart from the rest of creation, a devout understanding of nature leading to and culminating in one God, then we must concede to them a very high conception of the problems which we are all trying to solve. They belong to the rocks and the plains and the rolling hills just as do the flowers and birds and the herds. In the winter they bury themselves like cocoons, under the ground; with the first warmth of the spring sun they break their shells and emerge in their brightly coloured fluttering clothes and flit

to and fro like butterflies over the Steppes, resting now at this spring and now at that. When they reach a valley where the ground is moist and fertile, they pitch their tents and stay till the grass is eaten down, and then flit a few miles further. When they leave a camping ground they leave no sign behind them; no ugly refuse, no empty cans and broken litter. So they, and the races which have preceded them, have done for centuries, and the earth shows no more sign of their passage than of the flights of birds. They have no interest in the past, no traditions; their memories do not extend beyond their fathers' time. They refer vaguely to their predecessors as Kalmucks, but the reference is so undefined that it is of no value whatever. There are few, very few, traces left of the race which inhabited this country before the Kirghiz. The most impressive remains of human activity are the old workings of the copper mines. These are undoubtedly exceedingly ancient and are referred by some to an age before iron was known. Large stones also are found, about six feet long and about twelve by eighteen inches square. They are usually of granite, and one side is ornamented with outline carvings of a human face and other marks, the whole nearly obliterated by time. In one place we saw a large number of them standing in the ground upright. The whole had the appearance of a cemetery, but we had no opportunity for investigation. These also are



A PREHISTORIC MONUMENT OF STONE



KIRGHIZ MOGHILAS, OR TOMBS



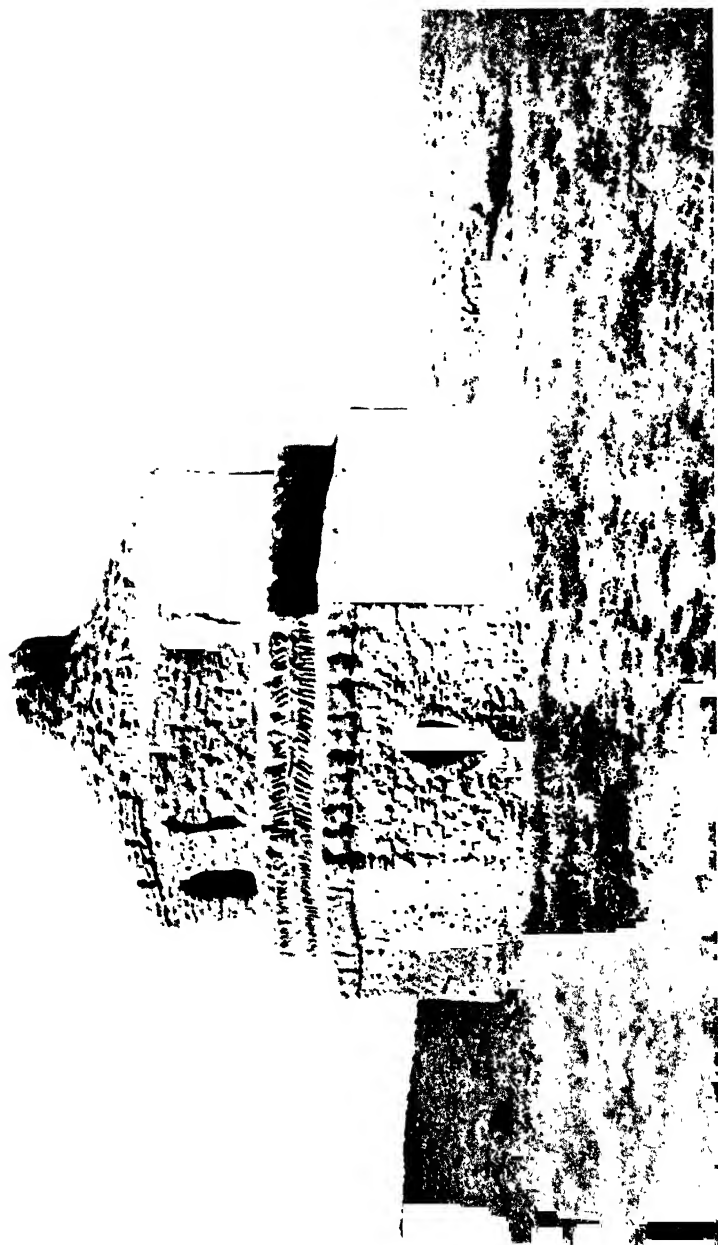
obviously ante-Kirghiz; no Kirghiz ever wasted his time carving stone.

Another evidence of ancient human endeavour were two parallel walls buried in the ground. These could be traced in an absolutely straight line for two or three hundred yards. They suggested an aqueduct; but whatever it might have been, it was certainly not made by the Kirghiz.

The only monuments which the Kirghiz are leaving are their moghilas or tombs. Philosophers, detached philosophers, as they are, they share with the rest of humanity the reluctance to be snuffed out, body and soul, by death, and to leave nothing behind by which they will be remembered by their heirs. So that, while thousands must die and leave no trace behind them, still, some try to keep their memories green by building moghilas. For the poor man, simple walls enclosing a few feet of the desert; for the well-to-do, a covered structure, shaped like a hen's egg cut in two, with a small opening on one side; for the rich man, a structure displaying a considerable sense of the art of architectural proportions and symmetry; having usually a square base with a round dome rising from the centre, ornamented with crenelations, little towers and openwork lattice, as elaborate as the crumbling character of the material will allow. For, alas! the material is only the sun-dried clay brick, bound together with a little straw and mud, doomed to a quick decay. To

work with his hands is hateful to a Kirghiz and he refuses to build even an ancestral tomb with anything less pliable than mud. One tomb which we saw, made of clay puddled with mare's milk, betrayed a pitiful effort of the builder to increase its durability without increasing his own work. Once built and finished, they receive no further care, no repair, no cleaning, and I surmise that, if the dead Kirghiz' soul depends for its safety upon the prayers of the survivors, it is in a hazardous position.

To an "intelligent traveller," the really noteworthy feature of the work on these tombs is that it is carried out in precisely the form and method of construction of two thousand years ago. One form of brick ornamentation is particularly noticeable, because it is everywhere found in the work of people who came under the influence of the Greeks at the time of the expeditions of Alexander of Macedonia. If the "intelligent traveller" has been wandering for days over the Steppes without seeing a living being and suddenly comes across one of these domed and turreted tombs, with the handwriting of Alexander on the walls, he experiences a sensation that he never felt on Broadway or Piccadilly or anywhere else on this planet. From the marriage of Greek and Semitic thought, which met in these Steppes two thousand or more years ago, has been transmitted to him the whole sum of all that he knows.



A MOGHILA ON THE HUNGRY STEPPES

Built alas, of sun-dried brick!





Anyhow the present Kirghiz know nothing about mines or stone monuments and are not in the least interested in them. They are the children of the Steppes, living and dying in them, as the animals do, leaving no enduring trace or vestige behind them.

If you come from the western world where man has grown to consider himself as set apart from the rest of nature, where he wages an eternal war against her, where he tries to wrest her secrets from her by force, where he spends his time in what he calls the struggle for existence; if you come from the struggle of such a world, and stand on the borders of this vast expanse, and gaze across its unsoiled surface, you feel a conception of the harmony of nature which first confuses and then overwhelms you, and you are ready to bow your head and acknowledge that, in the smoke and confusion of the turmoil which you left behind, there were many things hidden from you and many things which, had you seen, you could not have understood.

One early morning we were driving along a broad valley. Dawn was breaking, the sky was tinged with yellow toward the east; the skylarks were rising to meet the sun. We saw a solitary horseman riding two or three miles ahead of us. He was climbing the slopes of the highest hill and he reached the top as the first rays of the sun appeared. He had ridden to the top of the

hill to meet his truest friend, and when he appeared above the horizon and filled the earth with a golden light, the solitary figure got down from his horse and prostrated himself many times to the ground in adoration. For several minutes he stood there, gazing at infinity, then mounted his horse and rode away. I cannot tell what his thoughts were, but I know that our thoughts told us that there were in this world a great many things of which we had never thought before and of which our civilization had told us nothing. Truly the majesty of nature, when man is in harmony with her and not striving to master her, has a breadth and depth, which seizes and dominates the soul. Amid such surroundings was monotheism born and I never saw the Kirghiz and watched them at their simple daily life without thinking that to them and to their forebears, wandering in their eternal solitudes, with the curtain of the stars their only shelter by night, we owed the germs of thought which grew into a conception of one and only one God and brought the rest of the world into one harmonious whole with nature.

We had about seventy miles to travel to reach Lake Djusali. Spring time on the Steppes is a wonder of delight; nature seems in such a hurry to be sure and lose none of the precious moments of the short summer. Our road led us through Tasty Adir, an old Kalmuck mine, where we had recently

done some work. It lay in a basin, carpeted with green grass and flowers, surrounded by hills. We entered the basin through a rocky defile and stopped for a while at the hut of the Kirghiz Akin whom we had sent there in the previous autumn, as watchman. Seven months ago he had left the works with his wife and child and with his winter supplies: three barrels of flour, two pounds of tea, three pounds of sugar, two gallons of kerosene and four boxes of matches and his cow. He was at his post when we drove up and he looked upon our arrival as the act of God, for his provisions were running rather low. By whom, and when, these old mines were worked we do not know. Whoever they were, they worked the rich surface deposits by large open cuts which they filled behind them as they worked, so that it requires a practised eye to detect the workings at all.

We arrived at Lake Asoomal Kool in the evening, one of the red lakes occasionally seen in the Steppes, with water of a vivid dark brick-red colour, and our Russian driver was much averse to going farther, said the horses were tired and that he could not find his way in the dark. But we told him that there was a full moon that night and insisted upon his going on. In due course the moon arose and we explained to him what a valuable asset real knowledge was and if he had a little more, etc. He drove sulkily on. We dozed

in our basket. We soon heard his voice calling and woke up. The night was clear, the stars were sparkling, but it was dark.

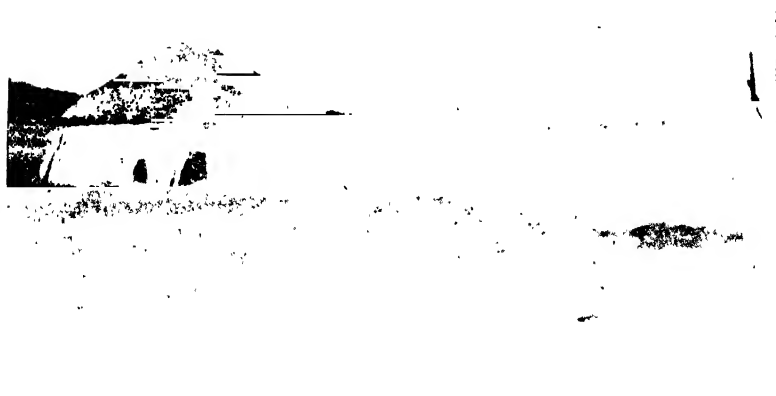
"Where is your moon, Barin?" he asked, "I cannot see the road."

It was a fact, the moon had disappeared: it was a total eclipse. My reputation with that driver was gone forever. We had to stop where we were without food or water. Of course, it was sheer hard luck and such a combination might not arise again for a thousand years, but my lecture on the usefulness of knowledge fell very flat.

Next morning we drove into the Aool of our friend Koorman; a camp of a dozen or more felt tents, into the whitest of which we were escorted. The great skin of koomiss was brought in, a huge skin, three feet in diameter, with a narrow neck. It was churned to a foam with a wooden dasher and served in large painted bowls; the skin is rawhide with the hair side inside, a considerable portion of which is served with the koomiss. You must not be fussy when you are living with the Kirghiz and you must abandon all preconceived ideas of germs and bacilli; for the skin is never emptied but always replenished with fresh milk, which of course becomes immediately sour. During my six years' stay in the Steppes, I never dared to look inside one of their koomiss skins. Koomiss itself, when it is good and fairly clean, is not unpleasant, and as it contains about three per cent



THE RIVER TCHIDERTI IN SUMMERTIME  
In the soft ground accidents often happen





of alcohol it is quite exhilarating; but indifferent koomiss is so bad that, even at this distance of time and space, its memory is unendurable. In appearance it reminded me of a dish we used to have as children which we called "floating island," but if our watchful mothers could have seen the islands floating on the koomiss, which we were condemned to consume, they would have despaired of our lives.

Somehow the Kirghiz live on it and thrive on it and sweet milk is an abomination to them; they do not consider it fit for human food; it is absolutely forbidden to them by their religion, a much easier milk standard to live up to than ours. What they can do with sour milk is surprising. It appears in numerous different forms, solid and liquid, and with boiled meat forms their unvarying food; healthy enough they seem, with exceptionally fine teeth—even the old men and women have perfect ivory semicircles.

After koomiss came the samovar and tea. The samovar is heated with burning dung, and the acrid smell of the smoke combined with the sour milk and rancid cheese is a combination which immediately surfeits all your senses at once.

Then came the crowning act of hospitality, what we should call "ordering the dinner." The host's men led up to the door of the tent a beautiful piebald two-year-old horse, the greatest compliment they can pay to guests of distinction,



and then and there at the door of the tent, it was slaughtered and carried away to the tent where the cooking is done. At this point the entertainment had reached a gastronomical climax which I found very difficult to endure. Koorman broke the silence through the interpreter, who spoke in Russian. "The Bai (this is a Kirghiz word for lord or master) is a very rich man, he builds great smelting-works and railways and employs thousands of men; he is welcome to our Aool; although we have very little, he is very welcome here; everything we have is at his service."

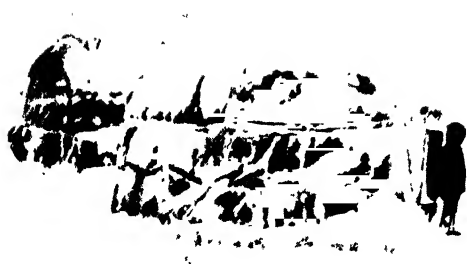
I did not disturb his ideas of my individual wealth, but murmured some suitable reply. In any case, pretty speeches sadly lose their effect when reproduced by an interpreter; I have often spent hours preparing suitable speeches in Russian, only to have my Russo-Kirghiz interpreter reduce them to half a dozen words, which meant nothing.

"The Bai is so rich, that, what we have, must seem very small to him; but he has seen our herds, does he think our horses beautiful?"

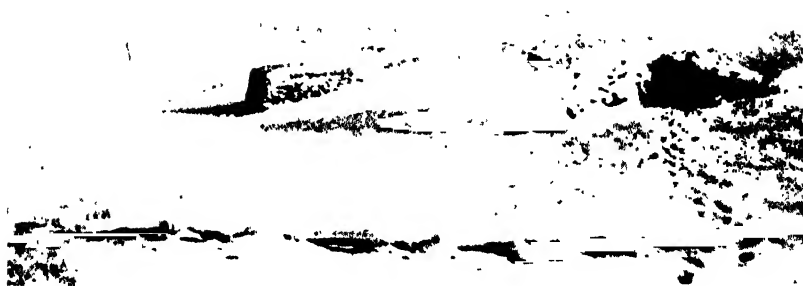
I replied that we admired his horses very much and that, although they were not so large as ours, their conformation was very fine.

"I have a thousand horses," continued Koorman, "how many has the Bai?"

I stammered that I owned five. This information produced a most depressing effect.



YOUNG AMERICA AT THE DOOR OF HIS KIRGHIZ TENT



KIRGHIZ ZIMOFKAS, OR WINTER QUARTERS



"The Bai is so rich," he said, "and yet only owns five horses. I do not understand it; Sultan Djingir has four thousand horses, Sultan Djumbek has two thousand and Adam Bai is said to have three thousand, and you say that you have only five! How many sheep does the Bai own?"

"I regret to say that I own no sheep," I replied.

"Ah! Probably the Bai owns large herds of cattle?"

"I have two cows," I said.

The conversation was assuming a most unfortunate turn and I felt I was losing ground every minute. Something desperate had to be done. I remembered that I had in my pocket a coloured photograph of the Poinciana Hotel at Palm Beach which I had lately received from a friend in Florida.

"It is true, my friend," I said, "that I do not own any cattle or sheep or horses, but see the house in which I live when I am in my own country," and I showed them the brightly coloured print. The effect was magical. The card was passed from hand to hand with every expression of amazement and delight; my stock bounded upward and never, after that, fell below par. May I be forgiven for my deception!

I had now regained my courage and again attacked the horse question with confidence.

"Horses in our country are very expensive," I said.

Koorman's interest was instantly aroused.

"How much does a good horse sell for in your country?"

I thought of the sale of Ormond for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars and replied:

"A good horse fetches two hundred and forty thousand roubles."

"That sounds incredible," said Koorman, "it is impossible to pay such a sum for a horse which twenty or thirty men will consume in a day."

I dropped the subject for I knew he could not quickly grasp such a novel and absurd view of the horse, the subject which he really knew from top to bottom. To the Kirghiz the horse is the best of all animals; it is the most easily wintered, the mares give the best milk and are never ridden or worked, the horses furnish the finest meats and are their faithful servants for moving their camps, for watching their flocks, for herding their cattle. It is impossible to conceive of life on the Steppes without the horse. Noticing that Koorman wore a green cap, I next asked him about his pilgrimage to Mecca. If the Kirghiz has any object in life except life itself, it is to visit the shrine of the prophet at Mecca. Only the wealthy are able to attain it and the returning pilgrim is stamped with the seal of spiritual and worldly success.

"We first went," Koorman related, "by rail as far as we could, and then embarked in a large boat on a lake which entirely surrounds the island

on which Mecca stands; and this lake is filled with the most horrible stinking water, which causes you and your fellow pilgrims to vomit in the most frightful manner, and I shall never go to Mecca again on account of the stinking water of the lake which surrounds it."

It was apparent that his ideas of oceans and geography in general were fairly vague and that subject, also, I abandoned.

I then asked him about the education of his children and how he managed to have them taught.

"I have my own schoolmaster," he replied, "and he teaches my children and other children who care to be taught; let us go and see him at work."

We went into another tent whence a Babel of chattering voices proceeded. Entering, we found about a dozen children sitting in a row, the teacher standing before them. Each child was holding before him a fragment of what once had apparently been a book, printed in Arabic and bound in paper boards; or perhaps the remains of several books. One child had one side of a cover, another had the other side, a third had one fragment of the printed pages, a fourth had a different page; all were apparently reading as fast as possible and in the shrillest possible tones. As we entered, the teacher called for silence and we asked him some questions about his pupils. He told us that they were now studying the Koran, that

they never studied anything else and that they studied in this way for several hours daily. He gave the signal and instantly every child began to shout at the top of his voice, apparently reading from the pasteboard cover in his hands. The marvel is that reading and writing can survive at all under such a system. It must be said that the survival is very limited.

As we went back to our tent the sun was low and the flocks and herds were coming in from the pasture. For handling stock the Kirghiz need no teacher, they and the animals are one, the horses are reared as colts with the babies in the tents, so are the weak kids and lambs; no force is ever used; just patience. It would be impossible to imagine two methods of accomplishing the same end more different in character, than that of the Kirghiz in the East, and the American cowboy in the West. No whirling lariats, no bucking horses, no violence of voice or action. What would the western plainsman think if he could see a steer saddled and a man sitting thereon, herding his horses!

By the full moon we wandered through the acres of animals which had carefully sorted themselves and were resting for the night. Everything was still. The effect of the extraordinary stillness, where there was so much possibility of motion and noise, was overpowering. The whole world seemed to be at rest and at peace.

But we had our gastronomical duties to finish



SULTAN DJINGIR  
The owner of four thousand horses





and, as soon as we came back to our tent, our host and his sons and the bard and the chief men of the Aool came in and the huge steaming platter was brought in. It was entirely anatomical; you recognized every portion sprawling in its boiled helplessness; every internal organ was there complete and, from the centre, the two lustreless eyes gazed upon you with reproachful stare. I knew that the taper fingers of our hospitable host would soon convey these hideous morsels to my mouth. It was too much for me; I fled. What they thought of me I do not know. My western organization could not stand the strain.

In the evening the bard came in and, sitting on the ground, twanged his wooden *dombra* and filled the air with piercing wails, extolling the virtue and bewailing the weakness of human nature. It was very much like hearing the Proverbs of Solomon or the Psalms of David; but if David used his harp as our bard played on his *dombra*, Saul is to be excused for attempting to slay him with his javelin.

Unfortunately, it was not the season for hunting and the great eagles sat idly on their perches, with their heads hooded, waiting for the winter when they would be turned loose on the foxes and wolves and bighorn sheep.

So the days passed and we harnessed up the piebalds and prepared to leave. Koorman was also packing up his tents and moving to the next

pasture. The operation was carried out with the most incredible speed. In the morning there was a village with all the necessary equipment for a hundred or more souls and in three hours it was all on the backs of camels and moving away. Where they had been living for a month there was not a sign of their occupancy left; no scraps, no half-burnt fires, no litter; nothing. What a simple thing is life when there are no wants except the bare necessities.

"Kosh," they cried as we moved away, many of them riding a few miles with us to see us safely on our road.

Whatever else our visit accomplished it established our position forever as the trusted friends of the Kirghiz, and this was worth all the trouble that it cost us. And if we could not succeed in teaching them that the world is round, they succeeded in teaching us that a people can be happy and can lead a life of dignity and graceful gentleness, amidst a simplicity of surroundings such as we had never before imagined to be possible, and we began to realize how ridiculously complicated are the conditions which we have laboriously built up for and around ourselves.

## THE PURCHASE OF THE MINE OF THE ASSUMPTION.

THE task was assigned to me of closing the deal for the mines, and I met the Russian lawyers at Tcheliabinsk, which is an important railway point on the Siberian Railway, about six hours east of the summit of the Ural Mountains, geographically in Siberia, but administratively in Russia. It was in June, 1904, while the Japanese war was in progress, and the station and railway packed with officers and soldiers, and a motley crowd of travellers, Tartars and peasants. We there left the bustle and confusion of the main line and started on a branch railway, for the mining town of Yekaterinburg.

The Siberian Railway is operated with a considerable amount of precision and dash, but our line was a survival of ancient days and the train proceeded with the utmost deliberation. We left behind us the electrically lighted train with its charming "Wagon Restaurant" where the most delicious five-course dinners are served for fifty cents, and made ourselves as comfortable as we could in our dreary compartment, lighted with a

single candle. Twelve weary hours of visible darkness were passed in this fashion. When the train finally pulled into the station of Yekaterinburg there was the usual crowd of vociferating *zvostchiks* and we selected the smartest looking one we could see. The town had a pleasant look and we were glad to be out again in the sunshine. We rattled gaily over the cobblestones. Suddenly the carriage gave a lurch and came to a sudden stop; I was thrown out and began to think of abusive terms in Russian but was hopelessly outpaced by the lawyer.

"Thou ultimate past master of devildom, why dost thou travel in that fashion!"

"Oh master, kind master, dost thou not see my little wheel? See yonder how fast it goes," murmured the driver.

And truly it was a fact, one of the front wheels had come off and was bowling down the street until it fell on its side in the gutter.

"Confound you and your little wheel! Call another carriage for us!"

"Oh, but master, I will quickly fetch my little wheel and in a few minutes . . . you will see."

And in a few minutes with the aid of much string and the invocation of many devils we were safely landed at the hotel.

Yekaterinburg is an interesting old town, created and still enduring by reason of the large mines which have been opened in its neighbour-

hood, on the eastern flanks of the Ural Mountains. Gold, platinum, copper and iron have been mined and manufactured in the neighbourhood for centuries. To these mines the family of Demíдов now owes its wealth and princely rank, originating with old Nikita Demíдов, who gained the favour of Peter the Great by his skill in the blacksmith's art. A mining town always has a flavour of its own and Yekaterinburg is full of old families which form a sort of aristocracy of wealth and tradition. Of such a type was the family which now owned the mine of the Assumption, for the purchase of which we had come to the town. The grandfather, Ivan, had been a sturdy pioneer and had laid the foundations of the family fortunes; the father, Dmitrii, had come into possession of the mine of the Assumption through his old friend Yegorov. Yegorov had been for years a prisoner in the hands of the Kirghiz and he made himself so useful to them that they made him a present of a hundred versts of land. Guided by a prospector's instincts, he selected the land which became later the site of very profitable mines. To obtain capital to work them he applied to his old friend Dmitrii and, for fifty years prior to our arrival, they were worked with much profit. This operation denotes a certain hardihood of character which attracts attention, for, until very recently, the only connection between the mines and the base at Yekaterinburg was the open steppe; the

distance was about seven or eight hundred miles and the journey required about twenty or thirty days for ordinary travellers, and about two or three months for the transport of supplies. But when I sympathized with the owners on such difficulties they grew scornful and asked me how I would have liked to operate their mines on the Amoor river, when there was no Trans-Siberian railway? Even while we were staying in Yekaterinburg, the carriers begged us to let them carry the machinery, which we were purchasing, to the mines, at the price of twenty-two dollars per long ton; as one horse and wagon can draw about half a ton, it follows that one horse and wagon travel for seven hundred miles and back again for eleven dollars. These offers were made by responsible carrying firms corresponding to our leading express companies. Thirteen or fourteen hundred miles seems a long trip for a horse and wagon for eleven dollars.

To return to our mine-selling family, the sturdy pioneers were now dead and only the mother of the numerous heirs, with whom we had to treat, survived. She was a grand specimen of the old school, full of dignity, native wit and common sense, and, although she received from all her children a full measure of respect, she seemed to be separated from them by a wide gulf of time.

There were two married daughters and three sons, all grown men. None of them seemed to have

# THE LIMITLESS EXPANSE OF THE STEPPES







the depth and dignity of the mother, although agreeable and kindly in their manners. They had all been to Paris, the goal of their desires, and all seemed to take a flippant view of life. It had not occurred to any of them that study might have a practical application; they regarded it as an ornament they could very well dispense with. One of them had been for several years the local manager of the mine. He was not a certificated engineer and, after considerable prevarication, was forced to go before the Mining Board at Tomsk to pass the legal examination. Full of confidence in his good looks and his family name, he duly appeared before the Board for his viva voce test. In due course the subject of pumps was introduced and the question was asked by the professor, "When the plunger rises in the cylinder, the water follows it and rises too; what is the cause of this?" The answer came like a flash "Tchort vo neezoo" (the devil below). I never could obtain a direct reply from him, when I asked him whether he had received his diploma or not. As a matter of fact, he maintains to this day that he is right, and that there is a devil below who does these wonderful feats. Perhaps he really is right!

It appeared that the first step in our negotiations must be a formal call on the family, at which time we would be presented to the heirs. So, arrayed in our most beautiful clothes, my lawyer friends and I selected a carriage whose "little

wheels" seemed fairly secure, and started. Our road led us through the huge square at one end of which stands the great church of St. Catherine. We were about half way across, rattling over the cobblestones near one side of the square, when my friends became very much agitated.

"Spit, spit!" they cried, and they began to spit and to gesticulate wildly to the driver.

"Na pravo, na pravo, tchort vosmee," (the devil take you, go to the right).

Were these sober lawyers from Moscow or was I escorting two madmen? The driver began to spit and yelled to his horse, jerked its head toward the other side of the square and did not draw rein till he had reached it. The danger seemed to be over now and everyone relieved.

"May I ask," I said, "as an intelligent and observant foreigner, whether it is customary for Russian lawyers to become insane when driving in public squares?"

"Did you not see the priest?" they both cried.

"And what of it?" I asked.

"Surely you know," they said, "that you dare not pass a priest on the public road and that, if you do, you must spit three times; otherwise you will have dreadful luck."

"Hush," I said, "someone may hear you and take you to an asylum."

And it was not until we arrived at the house of the heirs that they regained their composure.

The house we stopped at was an imposing structure, built in a court, entirely surrounded by a high wall, with the dignity which is characteristic of the houses of well-to-do residents in Russian provincial towns.

We were led through room after room and finally into the large salon. All the rooms were elaborately decorated, but the only physical need which seemed to be provided for was that of sitting down—small chairs lined the walls of each room, and sometimes in a corner there was a table with a vase upon it. The effect of space was excellent and it was very convenient for a ball, but it was not an arrangement to make heirs and lawyers feel at their ease when they first met.

We were a little stiff until the notary arrived; but when he came, he seemed to take charge of the whole business. I wondered why we or the heirs were there at all, it would have been much simpler to let him raise all the questions and answer them himself. He did it all anyway, and none of us were at all necessary. He told *us* we must pay so much, and that *they* must release certain claims and that *we* must come back in three days with the money in cash, and that *they* must obtain the releases of the wives of all the dead ancestors, and finally would we honour him by drinking tea with him on the following day? By that time, he had us all under such complete control that we would have done anything to

oblige such an all-knowing and all-powerful being, and we expressed our pleasure in suitable terms.

"My wife and I are alone," he said, "and it will give us much pleasure to drink tea with such distinguished visitors."

The next morning we went to the bank on which our draft was drawn, to identify ourselves and leave our signatures and transact other formalities. When it came to my turn and I presented my passport and credentials, an unusual look of intelligence gleamed in the clerk's eye and he hurried off with the documents to his chief, who looked at me, then at the passport, then back at me and finally sent for the manager. They all came up to me and engaged me in conversation, in what seemed to me of an unnecessary and interminable length. The condition of the weather at Petersburg, the probable duration of the war, my impressions of the value of democratic versus oligarchical institutions in the development of a new country, these and many other subjects were thoroughly threshed out. I protested that though these subjects were intensely interesting and of the greatest possible theoretical importance, the business of the day was not being advanced in the least by the discussion of them at that moment. This remark only seemed to whet their appetites for general information and they became more and more talkative, until the door was thrown open and the President rushed into the room.

THE GREAT SNOW CAMEL OF THE NORTH





"Here comes the President," they said. "Glory be to God!" and turning to the newcomer —

"Mr. President, it has fallen to our happy lot to enable you to arrest the desperate criminal and forger of whose activities the chief of police at Moscow has warned us."

Sensation! At this supreme moment, when, by all the rules of the game, I should have turned on my accusers and, with a look of cold and haughty disdain, have overwhelmed them with shame and confusion, I regret to say that my behaviour and manner must have convinced them of my guilt. I remember feeling very nervous and I am able to testify that the mind which is conscious of right works exceedingly slowly at critical times, and, when most needed, often leaves the poor body without support for a cruel length of time.

The President of the bank was the first to speak.

"I regret," he said, "that the zeal of these employees should have been the cause of any annoyance to you and I am delighted that the evidence in our hands should be so complete, as to leave no doubt that an unfortunate mistake has been made. Sir, pray accept our heartfelt apologies. You will however, agree, when you see these papers, that there is some excuse for the mistaken zeal of our officers; in our business we must be suspicious."

He then showed me letters from myself to the Moscow police, letters from the police to all



mayors, bank officials and others, the purport of which was, that, whenever a person with passport in the name of E. Nelson Fell, American citizen, (then followed general description) presented himself, the police should be notified and the man be immediately arrested, for he was a dangerous criminal. Like a flash I remembered the whole incident of our acquaintance with X. He had joined us as an interpreter when we first came to Siberia; he was a clever man with an extraordinary knowledge of languages and, in his position, had an opportunity of acquiring a certain intimate knowledge of our affairs and history. After six months' acquaintance with him we caught him red-handed in some rascality and discharged him. The man then obtained by fraud, a passport in my name from the American Embassy in Petersburg and then proceeded to go up and down the country, victimizing trusting persons in my name. The matter caused me so much annoyance and trouble that I took energetic steps to stop it by writing to the police in Moscow and other officials. These steps had evidently been effective as, for several years I had heard of no new exploits of my friend and had forgotten all about the matter until my memory was so rudely refreshed in the bank. About six months later X. was arrested for some crime and a most extraordinary record of successful roguery was laid bare. All of which shows that a passport may be a dangerous weapon in the

hands of villainy, as well as a useful tool in honest hands.

A curious echo of this passport incident was heard in far-away Colombia where I was travelling six years later. I called on the United States consul at Barranquilla and presented to him my passport for registry at Bogotá. There was an unusual delay in returning the passport and it turned out that one of the Secretaries at Bogotá had been Secretary at Petersburg during my passport incident and refused to record it, until thoroughly satisfied that it was genuine. Which calls up a variety of reflections, none of which would advance this story a particle and are therefore postponed to a more convenient season.

The next day after the usual massive dinner which is served in hotels in most small towns in Russia at about two, we went to the home of our new friend, the all-masterful but very agreeable Notary, anticipating the delicious tea, which is served in such a pleasant manner in Russia.

There is no more fascinating method of nourishing the human frame than drinking tea in a well-appointed Russian house. The Russians are naturally good talkers and they seem to draw inspiration from the tea itself and the surroundings. The hostess sits at the samovar and does not tire of polishing the glasses and saucers when she rinses them in their never-ending procession; the samovar never falters in its important rôle of pro-

viding boiling water in unfailing supply; the second glass is as good as the first, so are the third and fourth; conversation ripples gaily, the hours pass unnoticed. The intellect is brightened, the nerves are soothed. It is altogether and entirely charming.

After a brief pause, we were introduced to our hostess who invited us into the next room, as she said, "to take a little refreshment." The "next room" was furnished with a large table elaborately laid for dinner for five persons and we were escorted to a side table which was covered with an extraordinary and bewildering display of cold dishes; several large fresh fish cooked whole, a half of a smoked salmon, the same of a sturgeon, a large bowl of fresh ikra (caviar), also one of salt roe, a ham, a smoking plate of stewed kidneys on a chafing dish, chicken jellies, rye bread, brown bread, white bread, and a dangerous looking row of bottles. My ideas of a Russian "glass of tea" received a rude shock.

The Notary immediately took the nearest bottle of vodka and putting glasses into our hands, filled them, and with a toast of "I drink to your excellencies' health, pray make merry," he tossed off his glass and of course we followed suit.

"Begin with this caviar," he said, "it is fresh from the Volga."

"Not before I have drunk your health," cried the lawyer. And that meant another glass; then

came a helping of one fish and then another, and between each one the apparently necessary glass of vodka.

"I am glad you like the vodka," said the Notary. "It is a good brand, but you must now try my sherry and bitters, that too is good," and with this he filled our plates with stewed kidneys and our glasses with sherry, and then (I think, though I confess my memory becomes hazy) with white port. After that, I kept eating in a continuous fashion, but my memory fails to distinguish between the ham and the fish and the roe and the kidneys. My recollection is that I remained eating in a purely mechanical manner, apparently to oblige my host. My mind was, however, quite clear to the fact that the situation was one of extreme gravity and that I must sit next the hostess at dinner and talk Russian to her.

"Aha!" cried our host, "dinner is served, I hope you have good appetites."

Miserable humourist, thought I, at any rate you shall not escape, what I eat you shall eat! And he did, plate for plate and glass for glass; it was a fair fight, no evasions sought or offered.

We sat down to the table. Now it is a recognized mistake for a beginner to attempt to talk Russian to a lady, unless his mind is quite clear, but my lawyer friends were growing gloomy and silent, and the situation had to be faced and somebody had to make conversation.

Dinner was served. First the bortsch, a delicious but heavy soup served in generous helpings by our host—sherry—then a mountain of crawfish was brought on, which were rather nice, for they are troublesome to eat and a great deal of time can be spent with a very small consumption of food—Rhine wine was served with the crawfish. Then came cutlets, served with Bass's Ale; next roast turkey and ham, with champagne, a great deal of it; next a sweet cream with port and then a variety of small dishes with sweet wines, which are not separated from one another with any distinctness in my recollection. My lawyer friends were absolutely silent. Our host, fortunately, maintained a steady stream of conversation, and my face maintained a fixed expression of absorbed interest. If he paused for a moment, I immediately begged him to proceed. The hands of the clock pointed to nine; I hoped that the ordeal was near its close. While I felt my inferiority to my host, yet I also felt that I was doing fairly well for an amateur and I prayed for strength to survive to the end.

Our hosts rose from the table; according to custom we shook hands with them, thanked them for their charming hospitality, praised the excellence of the dinner and proceeded to take our leave.

"Oh, you cannot go now, you must have a glass of tea, the samovar is in the next room."

Ominous words, "a glass of tea"; the same which he had used the day before to lure us to our doom.

But he spoke truly this time; the samovar was hissing on the table and the tea seemed particularly refreshing. Conversation became freer, the hands of the clock pointed to eleven. Again we rose to take our leave.

"Charming hostess, amiable host, as we take our leave, we leave our hearts in your keeping."

"Oh, but you are not thinking of going now, we are just about to have supper," he laced an arm with ours, "come and I will drink your health."

The lights seemed to fade and the earth to grow dark; all hope fled as we once more passed the fatal doors into the dining room. There was an audible groan; the author was never discovered, each accused the other. Our host maintained his imperturbable flow of conversation, but we were pretty nearly done for. I knew my look of animated interest could not stand the strain of another ordeal like the last. Nor did it, it was replaced with a glazed smile, but I am proud to say that I believe our host did not notice it.

We went through all the forms prescribed by usage; we stood at the side table and did again at midnight what we had done in the afternoon; the same voice announced the approach of supper; a series of courses appeared similar to those we had had at dinner, but of entirely new and freshly

cooked dishes; the same voice spoke unceasingly, the same smile froze my lips; the hands of the clock pointed to two. Again we took our leave, this time successfully. There is no doubt that it is possible to push a good thing too far, even "a glass of tea."

The next day was Thursday and we had our final conference with the heirs, to arrange about the details of closing the purchase. We were to pay over about two hundred thousand roubles and we proposed to hand them a certified cheque for this sum.

But they would not hear of it, the payments must be made in actual cash. This was a serious matter, for Friday and Saturday were bank holidays and in order to have the money available on Friday we must draw the money on Thursday afternoon and keep it in our rooms in the hotel all Thursday night. A very unpleasant prospect. It was during the dark days in Russia, when law and order were at a low ebb, when all kinds of crimes of violence were being committed, robbery, brigandage, arson, murder. Our arrival in town had been widely heralded; it was known on all sides that we were handling a large sum of money, curious eyes watched every movement we made, every visit we made to the bank was at once noted. We did not at all relish the idea of taking travelling bags to the bank and then returning with them full of money to the hotel. However, we yielded

the point and agreed to bring the cash the next day, Friday morning at ten o'clock.

"Impossible!" they said. "We are of the 'old faith,' tomorrow is a holiday of peculiar meaning for us; under no circumstances can we transact business tomorrow. Rather would we abandon the sale of the mine. We can live without selling the mine but we cannot live without favour in the sight of God."

Their ideas were absolutely fixed on these two points; no business on Friday; actual real cash on Saturday. The meeting adjourned.

That afternoon we went to the bank with our travelling bags and told them that we must have the two hundred thousand roubles in cash. They had expected us to take a certified cheque and to obtain so much cash in two hours was difficult. With the help of the Merchants Bank and of the Imperial Bank, the money was finally collected. But so much coming and going, with bags full of cash, had attracted wide attention and the bank managers were not reassuring.

"You are acting contrary to our advice," they said. "By this time everyone in town knows that you have a large sum of money in your possession. You have no place of safety in your hotel where you can deposit it. The town is full of desperate criminals."

Cheerful conversation, indeed, but there was no help for it and we came out of the bank with two



large suit cases stuffed full of notes, amidst an admiring crowd. The hotel porter greeted us with a knowing smile: "The Barin's travelling bags are very heavy: there are many in town who would like to have the honour of carrying the Barin's bags for him."

All that evening and night, all the next day and night we kept watch over those miserable travelling bags. No weary saint, keeping his lonely vigil, ever welcomed the dawn of his liberation more joyfully than we welcomed the dawn of the second day, and, at the appointed hour, we drove to the Notary's office. All the heirs were present, they sat in a circle round the walls of the room. The Notary stood at a table in the centre. Our lawyers entered the room and took seats at the table; I was to stay in a small room adjoining, with my precious bags. I waited and waited, but heard nothing except the low murmur of voices. Finally the door was thrown open and I was invited to come in.

Every eye in the room was instantly fixed on the two bags which I was carrying. They contained the solution of all the hopes and fears and doubts which had been surging in our breasts for so many weeks. Here was real human money; not bank credits and drafts and such like intangible assets, but the real thing, with which each one could pay his debts or cut his own particular dash according to his own particular pattern. The Notary an-

nounced that the conveyances had been properly executed, that all formalities were in order. "Will you please," he said to me, "be kind enough to pay the stipulated sum of money."

The bags were emptied on the table; the eyes of the heirs glowed brightly; the Notary counted the money and announced its correctness. He retained complete control of the situation to the end. He divided the money into several piles; so much for John and so much for Tom and so much for Mary; he bade each one take his share. In five minutes there was no money and nobody left in the room. The rape of the cash was absolutely complete. The heirs were all gone. We and the Notary stood alone.

A great chance for a moralist, but only a pedant would have found it necessary to put our thoughts into words.

The Notary smiled, we all smiled; a very understanding man, well versed in human fears and weaknesses.

We paid him his fee, paid his stenographers, paid the porter, paid the charwoman, paid the clerks at the bank who had helped us count the money, paid everybody something, and we went away with our bags and pockets feeling very light. After all, the heirs were probably right; there is nothing quite like the actual real cash.

## LOANS AND DISCOUNTS.

**I**T had been a long, tedious winter. All winters are tedious when they are seven months long. The first dash of the frost giants over the hills in the autumn is inspiriting, and the first jangle of sleigh bells over fresh snow makes the blood tingle, but before the first of May has come, the fierce winds have swept bare the level places, and where the snow lies it is driven into ice drifts and glazed by the emery blasts of the ceaseless storms. The landscape looks tired and it is tired, and so are you. Your fur coat and felt overshoes are hateful burdens; the storm doors and windows oppress your house with an airless grasp; each year it seems as though spring were delayed and would never come.

It was toward the end of April, 1906, that Henry Fordham and I were sitting in the company's office, lamenting the slow progress of the seasons, wondering whether the weather was showing any signs of change. The old Kirghiz, Baijan, was making up the stoves for the night; in the next room could be heard the ceaseless click of the counting boards, as the clerks were adding the interminable payrolls. Outside, a camel trans-

port train had just arrived from the mines—heavy two-humped beasts, with long fur knickerbockers and humps lying flabby on their backs, the only living animal that can look an icy blizzard in the face without quailing—each camel lashed to a small pair of runners on which was fastened a basket, in which was piled about seven hundred pounds of rich copper ore. Inside the carrier's office, the Kirghiz drivers were thawing out and chattering in shrill voices: "Aksha kerek, aksha kerek Bai" (Give us our money, boss!), and we could hear the invariable answer of our transportation clerk: "Aksha djok, aida!" (there is no money, go away). But this did not satisfy them at all, and the hubbub rose and fell till Fordham yawned and murmured something about sending the cashier to Akmolinsk for cash, and then rousing himself called in a loud tone, "Ivan, O Ivan!" and the felt-lined door opened and Ivan Kordé came in, a large Esthonian, of the Guild of Accountants of St. Petersburg, bonded to the company by his guild.

"Ivan, can you go to Akmolinsk tomorrow?"

"Yes, I can."

"How much money do we need?"

"Twenty thousand roubles."

"Well, make out a cheque on the Imperial Bank, and get ready to go; we need the money for pay-day next week; and—O Ivan—send Tokai for the stables foreman."

And in due time the starosta or stables foreman appeared:

"What are your orders?" said the starosta.

"I want the cashier to leave tomorrow morning at four o'clock for Akmolinsk. Send the chestnut horses forward at once to the Noura River for a relay, and the bays to Badpak, and let him start with the piebalds: he can hire horses at Beresovski for the last stretch to Akmolinsk," said Fordham.

"Your honour knows," replied the starosta, "but I have lived in this country many years and know the signs, and if the cashier leaves tomorrow for Akmolinsk, he will not return for at least three weeks: the thaw is beginning and the rivers will soon be in flood; he may reach Akmolinsk, but he will have time to drink much vodka before he can return."

"But the money, the money!" said Fordham, "we must have the money, he *must* go to Akmolinsk."

"Your honour knows about the money," cooed the starosta, "but I know, that if Ivan leaves for Akmolinsk tomorrow, he will not return for many weeks."

Fordham's face was troubled; we had of late frequently disappointed the workmen through lack of cash, and we dreaded to think of another payless payday. But the starosta was right, and already, as we left the office, the air had a tender feeling. The next morning, there was no doubt;



A RICH KIRGHIZ WITH HIS SECRETARIES  
A Russian interpreter is seated on the left



a warm wind was blowing, the ground was soft, little rivulets were trickling down the gullies; the starosta was right, spring had come. But, in spite of spring, there was no joy in Fordham's face when we met the next morning.

"What can we do?" he said. "We cannot face our men again when payday comes, if we have no money; it will be a scandal." And the situation was serious; we were absolutely cut off from the world, without apparently any possibility of securing cash for at least a month. We inquired here, there and everywhere; we could not scrape together a thousand roubles from all sources. And then the Kirghiz Kusain appeared and said:

"Your honour needs money?"

I was provoked and answered hastily:

"Of course I need money, everyone needs money, you need it too."

"Ah, but your honour needs it worse than I do."

"And if I do, can you supply it?"

"No, your honour, I am a poor man; but there are Kirghiz who are rich, very rich, who keep their money in rouble bills, locked in their tin-bound trunks. There is Adam Bai, brother of Djingir whose herd of mares you saw when we crossed the Noura together the other day. Djingir is rich, very rich, but he has not much money. Adam Bai is rich too, and he keeps his riches in money; perhaps he may lend you some of it, but



he will charge a great deal. O, he is rich, he is very rich!"

"Kusain—we will go and see him—where is he now?"

"He is now in his tents on the Ilinski River behind the Kisil Tav mountains, thirty miles from here."

"We will leave tomorrow and go and see him."

"You cannot leave tomorrow to see Adam Bai. Your honour is a great lord and Adam Bai is a great lord; tomorrow I will send two messengers on horses, who will tell Adam Bai that you are coming, and the next day you can go yourself and Adam Bai will be ready to receive you."

So on the third day, arrayed in our most beautiful clothes, with our best teams harnessed three horses abreast, each with our attendant interpreter, and with numerous mounted guards and escorts, we dashed off at full gallop through our little village, out on to the rolling steppes. Three days of spring had worked a miracle. The air was balmy and moist, and a mat of flowers was chasing the snow as it fled up the hills. Spring on the steppe is an ecstasy of nascent life; flowers, birds and animals all know that their day at last has come.

As we came near to Adam Bai's encampment, an escort of horsemen rode out to meet us and led us to the tent which had been prepared for us. It was a beautiful yurta or circular tent, about



KIRGHIZ WORKING-WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
Married women always wear a voluminous white head covering





twenty-five feet in diameter, with an outside covering of snowy white felt supported on a light wooden trellis with dome-shaped roof. As there are no poles inside, the whole floor space is clear. The floor was covered with gorgeous rugs and the walls were hung with silk mats. We took off our shoes and entered. The tunduk or cover was partly thrown back, and the setting sun filled the tent with red light. Around our tent were those of Adam Bai and his followers. They were arriving from all sides, driving in the herds before them; great herds of camels and sheep and goats and some cattle, which sorted themselves without confusion, the sheep lying down by themselves, the camels by themselves, the goats by themselves, and the cattle by themselves. Nature is so harmonious when she is undisturbed. They lay together and waited patiently for the rest which comes with darkness. The old men were gathered by the doors of their tents. Rachel was drawing water from the well; so they had been doing for forty centuries and more. The cradle of our race had been rocked under these stars, here had our childhood been spent.

Adam Bai came in with his sons and his friends, his secretary and his bard, Izat by name. We sat in a circle on the rugs, and the huge skin of koomiss was brought in, which was ladled out to us in painted wooden bowls. A colt was led in and Adam Bai explained that he was about to slaugh-

ter it for us, but to his chagrin, we begged him to substitute a sheep. After the koomiss was finished the samovar was brought in and tea and sweets were served, with rock-like cheese and bur-saks, little pellets of bread fried in tallow, the only food these people eat which is not either meat or milk.

The evening wore away in unceasing chatter, and I frequently asked Kusain whether the propitious moment for a business talk had arrived, and the answer was always "No." Finally, when our enfeebled western natures could absorb no more sour milk, several huge platters of boiled sheep were brought in; a young Kirghiz brought round to each person a copper kettle and bowl and poured water over our hands, and the real business of the day began. I never felt my inferiority so keenly before. Full to the high water mark with tea and sour milk and sour cheese, I dipped my hand in the dish and made bold passes at the hateful meat; but all my ruses were detected, and Adam Bai reproved my restraint, and, picking out with his fingers the eye of the sheep which was lying lustreless in the sodden mass, he thrust it into my mouth, a compliment of peculiar meaning. Never have I felt so helpless! It seemed the power of swallowing was lost to me forever. It seemed to be hours while I turned that horrible eye round in my mouth. Somehow the merciful end came at last, and Adam Bai

seized a huge lump of tallow and crammed it into the eager mouth of Kusain. What a delicious morsel to chew during the silent night.

Next morning we prepared to go, and I was growing alarmed lest the overwhelming hospitality of our host should thwart the business on which we came and which was so urgent, but at the last moment Kusain and the Secretary had some conversation, and it was explained to me that Adam Bai, considering the watchful care which we had always taken of the poor unfortunate Kirghiz who were compelled to work for money, would lend us the sum of twenty thousand roubles, provided we would repay him twenty-two thousand roubles within one month. Visions of the successful trades which Jacob had made on these very hills flitted before our minds, and, bowing with profound respect to such historic precedents reenacted for our benefit, we invited this successful son of the desert to visit us at our office one week from that day and bring with him his treasure. But there was not one word from Adam Bai himself. He sat stolid and unmoved. Not tall, but very fat, as all rich Kirghiz must be; a mass of wadded and embroidered clothes, squatted cross-legged on the floor, his small well-kept hands folded in front of him, his face without the shadow of any expression. And he said "Kosh" (goodbye), and we said "Kosh," and so we rolled away in our carriages, determined to take at least a correspond-

ence school course of desert training, before attempting again to enter the paths of high finance.

The days passed and payday was drawing near. The memory of the horrible deal we had made haunted us, and still more, the dread lest Adam Bai should fail us. As the workmen passed us they would ask "Will the money come?" and we set our teeth and replied "The money will come," and with "Glory be to God" on their lips they passed on. But one fine day the word reached us that tomorrow Adam Bai would come, and we killed the sheep and made ready to receive the wily financier. And the next morning he came with a rush; with a cloud of outriders, tearing at full gallop through the street, drivers shouting and lashing their horses, a disreputable-looking carriage with impossible harness, Adam Bai sitting in it like a Chinese idol with his poet by his side. And after he had divested himself of numerous fur coats, we escorted him to his seat of honour, in which he sat and grunted loudly, for it was a chair and he detested chairs, for they made his fat old body ache. But we felt a malicious delight in making him sit on our chairs, as the stork felt when he fed the fox from a long-necked bottle in return for the hospitality of the fox, which had fed him soup from a shallow platter.

Tea was brought in and conversation passed an hour or more, and in the first pause I said to Kusaïn, "Ask him if he has brought the money."

SOME OF ADAM BAI'S FRIENDS







"Hush," said Kusain, "he might hear you."  
Then the poet sang:

"Life is like a road; if you lose your way,  
It is not your enemies who will show you the path,  
But your friends.

The true friend is like the oaken stick upon which you  
lean and rest,  
But the false friend is like the reed upon which you lean  
and it breaks and the splinters pierce your hand."

I ask Kusain: "Is Adam Bai the oak or the  
reed? Has he brought the money?"

And Kusain replies again: "Hush, he might  
hear you!"

After the poet has finished, dinner is served, and  
several sheep rapidly disappear; but the only ex-  
pression which Adam Bai's face betrays is anger  
with his hateful chair. He is fed by his attendants  
and consumes many dried cherries, the stones of  
which he emits with great force and explosive  
sounds, and those which do not fall on our plates,  
fall on the table cloth around us. And the day  
wears on and we are growing convinced that the  
chances of money are vanishing, when the Secre-  
tary begins to talk Russian and Adam Bai sinks  
lower and lower in his chair. And we send for the  
notary, and the local policeman, and the judge,  
and the Russian manager, and the attorney, and  
all the other officers of the works arrive, and Bai-  
jan the stove tender, and all our servants, and the

room is filled to suffocation. It is the most solemn and important transaction which has ever taken place at the works. Ink is brought and green sand and long pens and sealing wax and seals, and everybody begins to write, and nearly everybody to sign, while the policeman threads the papers on red tape and seals them. Only Adam Bai is motionless; he is almost lying in his chair now. I say to Kusain: "Everything is nearly ready now, ask where the money is?"

"Hush," says Kusain, "you must sign these papers."

"But I won't hush; tell Adam Bai to make his servants bring the money."

But nobody seems to care about the money except myself, so interested are they all in the legal formalities; and the notary ties up his bag, and the policeman buckles on his sword and the whole ceremony seems to be over.

But I begin to lose my patience and I tell Kusain that something else must happen pretty soon, and Kusain whispers to the Secretary and the Secretary whispers into the wadded clothes, and the wadded clothes grunt. And then a most extraordinary scene begins. The old man is lying in the chair swaddled in countless layers of wadded cotton coats, his fat arms dangling over the arms of the chair. Two of his men rush at him, one from each side, they plunge their hands into the recesses of his clothing, and grope and pull; and

now one pulls out a bundle of notes and now another, and Adam Bai lies grunting, and as each bundle of notes is dragged from its hiding place, he emits a groan of despair; and the last bundle is a particularly big bundle, and his groan is the most pitiful of all, and he sinks down in utter collapse.

So much money on the table has fascinated the spectators who stand speechless with awe. The policeman takes charge of the situation and assigns the different bundles to different persons to count. The abacus is brought in and the little balls begin to click.

Adam Bai begins to stir in his chair, his attendants begin to search for their coats and caps.

"Nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven roubles," said the policeman to me.

Everybody was putting on his coat.

"Kusain," I said, "there is a shortage of three roubles."

Kusain apparently did not hear and began a search for my hat.

"Kusain," I said, "tell the Secretary we are three roubles short."

"Tut, tut!" said the Secretary, "I must help Adam Bai, the business is concluded, he wants to go."

"Kusain," I shouted, "tell the Secretary to tell Adam Bai that he has given us three roubles too little."

The Secretary turned to Adam Bai, who sat up

in his chair, and motioned for his boots. Nobody was paying any attention to me.

"Three roubles," I shouted, "three roubles short!"

"Impossible!" said Adam Bai, and he seemed to have waked up, "it must be under the blotter, or it may have fallen under the table."

"No," said I, "it is not under the blotter nor under the table; it is short, and I must have it to make our bargain good."

At this, the Secretary began to look under papers, and Adam Bai assumed great interest in all the out-of-the-way corners where a stray three-rouble bill might lie, and they all looked at me in an injured way with their mild innocent eyes, till I felt ashamed of my insistence. But I waited while they hunted and everyone hunted, until we were stopped by a cry from Adam Bai, "See here," he said (he was looking into his sleeve), "is it not strange, I have found a three-rouble bill up my sleeve; perhaps this is the one which was lost; I wonder how it got up my sleeve."

Oh, Adam Bai! Well art thou named Adam. Thou hast carried down to this generation the glorious tradition of original sin untarnished. Go in peace. Jacob's secrets are safe in thy hands.

And a deep silence fell on the room, and Adam Bai gathered up his clothes and left. And during the years which followed, he never forgave me our three roubles.

## THE UNION OF UNIONS.

**D**URING the autumn of 1905 things had been going very badly for Russia and in Russia. The war in Manchuria had always been unpopular; the rare Russian successes aroused no enthusiasm in the masses and the more frequent failures created only a sullen discontent. Within the boundaries of the Empire this discontent was being fomented by social agitators into seething discord, which broke out in attacks on the large land proprietors, in mutinies, in massacres and in movements which almost reached, in places, the dimensions of revolutions. Even in our remote steppes, five hundred miles from the railway, where the nearest post and telegraph offices were a hundred and seventy miles away, a feeling of uneasiness could be felt. The Russian Government had extended its dominions into the Kirghiz Steppes about fifty years before the date of this story, and the country was still under a military system of government, under the general control of the Governor General of the Steppes. On the whole the system had worked well and seemed well suited for the particular conditions which existed.

Along the Siberian Railway the soil is level and rich and more or less thickly settled with Russians and Tartars, farmers and merchants respectively. Proceeding southward the level of the ground gradually rises and it becomes more hilly. At times the hills become mountains, great granite crags two or three thousand feet high. The valleys contract, the rainfall is notably less and arable land is confined to the valleys of the infrequent rivers. Timber almost entirely disappears. The farther south you go, the more pronounced these conditions become; the Tartar is rarely found away from the railway and the larger towns, and the Russian is chiefly represented by the Cossack, a very remarkable type of man, with the soul of a pioneer, a love of freedom and a passionate adoration of his caste. He has the utmost contempt for the Russian peasant and the deepest reverence for God and Czar. He is never lukewarm ; if he dislikes, he hates; if he likes, he loves; his hatred covers all Germans, Jews and Poles and his love for Russia is a childlike adoration. You can recognize him at once; his house is clean, his carriage erect and full of dignity. I remember sleeping one night in the house of an Atamán (chief) at a ford over the river Noura. The house was spotless with fresh whitewash and paint, the windows were full of plants and flowers; the best bedroom had been assigned to me and my host was wishing me good night:

"Where is Kleb?" I asked.

"Gone to the war," said the old man.

"Where is Gregory?" I said.

"He, also, is gone to the war."

"You have no other sons?"

"I have no other sons."

I felt sorry for the lonely man and I made some commonplace remark about the hardship of seeing all one's sons go off to the war so many thousand miles away; but the old man's eyes began to blaze and he rose from his chair, and standing bolt upright he raised his hand to the salute and said:

"It is for God and the Czar!"

There he stood, the sentinel of Russia, gazing across the pathless solitudes which form her borders, the very incarnation of childlike simple faith. I took off my hat to the old man and we have been firm friends ever since.

To the southward, where the country is too poor for the peasant and the merchant, the Kirghiz love to roam and herd their flocks and endure the extreme of privation, provided they can escape the extremity of degradation, the necessity of manual work. And the Government treats them with a happy mixture of control and liberty. Their old system of patriarchal justice and law is left to them; they have their own codes and punishments and their own ways of enforcing their own penalties.

Under their system of property ownership and



with their diet of sour milk, it is hardly possible for them to commit a crime worthy of headlines in a New York newspaper, and they rarely have any difficulties with the Russians. As the country becomes more settled, conditions may change; but, at present, life on the Steppes proceeds with very little interference from the officials of the Government. Probably the cult of the Mahommedan religion has a peculiar sway over the pastoral Kirghiz, and the absence of liquor certainly removes one common form of offence; but, whatever the cause, the fact remains that the Kirghiz are a people of great self-restraint, and the result is a very happy one.

But even in this remote Elysian garden, disquietude and mistrust had begun to make themselves felt. Since we had taken possession of the mines and smelting works in 1902, we had very much enlarged the scope of all the operations and we were now employing, one way or another, close upon ten thousand men. The Russian Government, seeing the magnitude of our enterprise, had been favouring our neighbourhood, and had been laying out villages in the most fertile valleys, for the reception of immigrants from the crowded districts of Russia, especially Little Russia; Hohols, as they are called in local slang, as we say Hoosiers from Indiana, or Cockneys from London.

The chief of police at Akmolinsk, Nicolai Gregorievitch Niehoroshkoff, taking note of the prevail-

ing restlessness, had driven over in state and conferred with us long and earnestly. When we first arrived in the country and were new to the language and customs, the arrival of this most impressive officer used to terrify us a little bit. He would dash up to the house in a splendid uniform with rattling sabre, and two armed policemen riding by his side. His face was clean shaven except for the most terrific pair of mustaches. Immediately upon arrival at our house he took possession of all available space, established his office and began to receive the local officials. As we gradually learned the language and became familiar with the manners of the country, we found that his impressive exterior and military manners covered a peculiarly kind heart and a genial supply of merry humour. And as time passed he began to realize that we were serious in our work and that we could be relied upon to handle conditions with discretion and good judgment. In fact he was beginning to depend upon us for the preservation of order in our district.

But on the occasion of his last visit, he was worried:

"My friends," he said, "I am troubled, seriously troubled; everywhere there is trouble; in Russia the peasants are rising against the landlords, there is mutiny in the fleet, in Siberia there are everywhere disturbances. As yet, in our district all is quiet; but who can tell how long it may

remain so; already I know of some suspicious characters who have taken service in your employ; the utmost caution is necessary on your part; one false step and we may be plunged into a welter of confusion and an indiscriminate slaughter. I am helpless, all the Cossacks have left for the war, other force have I none and I shall be the first victim myself. For God's sake, my friends, be cautious; where is Andrei Michaelovitch Topornin?"

"He is at the Yuspenssky copper mines, in the position of manager during the vacation of Hannen, the English engineer."

"Is he in complete control as attorney under the Russian law?"

"He is," I replied.

"Ah, my friend, that is bad. I have my grave suspicions about that man; I tried to prevent his arrival here but failed. I fear his presence bodes no good; watch him, my friend. Has his conduct so far been good?"

"Exemplary."

"Watch him, my friend. Goodbye, may God be with you and help you; keep me informed of what is happening and call upon me for anything in my power. Farewell. Now Djumbek! Where is that devil Abdrachman! Put the pillows in the carriage, give me my shuba and my cap!" He disappeared into the carriage behind a mass of pillows and rugs; the whips cracked; the horses plunged, and he was gone.

We all became a little serious after he left. We began to realize how utterly unprepared we were to deal with a serious situation should it arise. The Chief of Police had warned us that he was unable to offer us any protection, whatever the need, and that we must rely upon our wits. Under the Russian mining laws all the heads of departments were Russians; and we, half dozen English and Americans without official position or power, were all that stood between the hordes of Russians and Kirghiz and the safety of the property which had been intrusted to us. We scanned the list of all our department chiefs and we speculated on the reliability of each one. There was the general manager, the smelter manager, the railway manager, the colliery manager, the doctor, the priest, the manager of the copper mine, the same Topornin against whom our friend had warned us. They all had their powers of attorney, they were in complete legal control; we were only advisers, mere ciphers; what actual power we had lay in our control of the funds. Who was false, and who was true? Where you do not know what to do, the safest thing is to do nothing. We scanned with great care all the reports which came in and especially those of Topornin from the copper mine. But they were all composed with scrupulous accuracy and as the weeks passed we began to think that the fears of our friend were groundless and that he had been suffering from the nightmare of suspicion.

On the twentieth of January, 1906, we were gathered in Kirghiz fashion around a low table in our sitting-room, drinking tea. It was our favourite hour of the day; the work was done, the candles were burning brightly, the curtains shut out the darkness and, within the thick stone walls of the house, we were able to forget for a few moments the twisting, swirling blizzard outside. Two Englishmen were with us, the Russian doctor (a brilliant visionary who called himself a Social Democrat, a graduate of Moscow University) and our general manager, who was a Pole from Lodz.

We heard the outside doors creak and our Kirghiz house servant, Noorman, came in and said that the messenger Ecubas had brought a letter from the copper mine. Ecubas came in and delivered the letter, which read as follows:

To the Director:

We, the undersigned employees and workmen at your copper mine, demand that our wages be doubled, that our quarters be enlarged and provided with new windows, that there must be a resident doctor here instead of an apothecary as at present, and that, unless these requests are granted, we, and all the workmen at the mine, will go on strike forty-eight hours from the time of writing this letter.

ANDREI TOPORNIN.

And a lot of signatures in Arabic purporting to be the signatures of the Kirghiz.

And a dozen other signatures including that of the apothecary himself.

One reading of the letter was enough to make plain to all of us that the letter had not been writ-

ten with the object of having any wrongs put right, but that it was a declaration of war. The general manager, Topornin, had affixed his signature in company with that of the men and it was plain that the chief of police had judged him correctly, and that the man was an organizer of trouble. We questioned the messenger Ecubas:

"Was there any suggestion of trouble when you left the Assumption Copper Mine?"

"None."

"Do you know of any discontent amongst the Kirghiz workmen?"

"I do not."

"Ecubas, you are a good man and have worked faithfully all your life in the service of these mines. You have received good wages and you must now do us a great service. You have ridden eighty miles today, but you cannot rest yet; I will write a letter to the Volostnoi Oopravitel (Kirghiz magistrate) Tocsan, and you must deliver it to him tomorrow morning; where is Tocsan now?"

"He is in his winter quarters at Nildi, twenty-five miles from the mines."

"I shall arrive at the mines tomorrow afternoon, and Tocsan must be there; you must be there too."

"Djaksi, Kosh." (It is well, goodbye.)

"Go to the stables and tell the starosta to give you two good saddle horses and order my horses for me at seven o'clock, with relays at Baidevlet,

Kisiltav and Sarasu. Doctor, will you come with me? You are a bit of an anarchist yourself and the men will perhaps listen to you when they may not listen to me."

"Yes, yes, I will come; call at my house as you drive by."

And he left, and our guests left, and Ecubas came for his letter and left, and we were alone with our thoughts. There was of course the chance that we had misjudged the situation, that the letter was genuine and was intended to formulate some specific complaints and that the whole matter could be readily adjusted; but this seemed a slender thread of hope and on the whole our thoughts were not cheerful.

I left the next morning at dawn and, picking up the doctor at his house, the sleigh lurched along the misty winter road, a mere track in the waste of snow. Old Djumabek was driving and Kusain was on the box by his side, ready in case of need. The going was fairly good except when we passed the long transport trains of camel-drawn sleds bringing in the ore from the mines; then we had to push out into the untrodden snow and the horses had a desperate struggle. We drank our midday tea at the hut of the teamster at Kisiltav. In the winter time the Kirghiz forsake their tents and immure themselves in underground quarters; no air is ever allowed to enter and only very few rays of light. But how often has the frozen trav-

eller welcomed these shelters as havens of ecstatic delight, after struggling for hours, sometimes days and nights, with the persistent blizzard outside!

The settlement around the Assumption Copper Mine never impressed one very cheerfully, but that day it was peculiarly forbidding. No welcoming hails greeted us and, as we drove up to the office and residence combined, there was a great crowd of men assembled, all with firearms, and we passed through a silent lane of faces into the house. To my great relief, on entering the room I saw, squatting on our sofa with his feet tucked in under him, the impassive figure of the Kirghiz magistrate, Tocsan. Well had Ecubas done his work! Here at least was one shadow of authority which the strikers would probably respect, for they would surely never dare to injure a Kirghiz, without whose aid they could not expect to win the fight.

After giving us a few moments in which to drink tea, a note was brought to me from Topornin by a self-styled committee of three, saying that he was waiting for me in his office. I replied by a note saying that he was discharged; in a few minutes the committee returned and notified me that the strike would begin at six o'clock and that I had better see to the pumps and boilers myself.

I spoke a few words to Tocsan and he waddled out, and when he returned he told me that he had assigned some Kirghiz to see to the safety of the



pumps and had placed watchmen at different points to guard against fire.

The evening passed in a fruitless wrangle with the committee of three. They argued that Topornin was the legally qualified manager, that he had promised them the demands they had made, that the strike was organized under the direction of the Union of Unions at Moscow, that I had better acquiesce or they would destroy the copper mine and then go on to the smelting works and destroy that too.

I asked them why, if Topornin was the manager and had promised them double pay and all their other demands, they did not go back to work; did they doubt whether he would pay them? Yes, they did doubt it, they wanted the director to confirm it.

"Well," I said, "I never will confirm it, not to-day, nor tomorrow nor any day: Topornin is discharged, and if you do not return to work without delay you will be discharged too."

The next morning I sent for different men whom I knew well to come and talk to me, but the messengers reported that the strikers would not allow them to deliver my message. So I prepared to go myself; but when I reached the door of the house, I was surrounded by half a dozen armed men, the committee of three being amongst them, who told me I could only see my friends in their presence. Finally it was agreed that I should meet all the



### LAKE DJESSUBAI

A small sweet-water lake in the granite range near the Cossack village of Bayan Aool



miners at a meeting, to be held in the afternoon at the store. I knew that if I could only talk to the leading men individually, I could win them over; but I had not much confidence in being able to accomplish anything in the presence of the strike organizers. However, the attempt must be made.

Now, Russian is not an easy language to learn, and, while a man may be able to use it fairly freely in ordinary conversation, yet he feels his inferiority keenly, when he stands before an angry Russian mob of a couple of hundred strikers, led by professional agitators, and tries to touch their senses or their hearts, in words which he has only learned to use in the last two or three years. Whenever I nearly succeeded in making a point, the agitators started a tremendous clamour and my voice was drowned in the uproar. After an hour's wrangle, I felt the situation was growing rapidly worse, and left the meeting.

That evening the water carrier and coal carrier did not call at our house and we were told that all supplies were stopped. On examining our stocks I found there was practically nothing left, only coal and water for the next day and scarcely any food at all. No one was allowed to come in or out of our house except Tocsan, and him the Russians were afraid to touch. Though they did not understand the Kirghiz and they ignorantly treated them with insolent contempt, yet their instinct prompted them to leave Tocsan undisturbed. The

idea of such an insignificant Kirghiz being able to disturb their carefully concerted plans was too foolish to contemplate. From the beginning I had realized that the Kirghiz alliance was the weak spot in the Russian war plan, and, after the failure of my frontal attack on the Russians themselves, I felt that my only chance of success lay in turning their Kirghiz flanks. Tocsan was silent and inscrutable, he played his rôle like a true Oriental. Through our interpreter Kusain I touched every string that seemed to give the promise of a harmonious note. I pointed out how the Russians were aiming at the looting and destruction of the property and how their success would mean the ruin of the Kirghiz: that the condition of the Kirghiz had been improved by the company and was constantly being improved, and that we would all rather die where we stood than yield an inch to such demands. Kusain assured me that Tocsan was working hard for us, and I, too, believed he was; but I could see no progress.

The third day dawned on a most depressing situation. The temper of the men was growing worse and more aggressive; loud threats were to be heard that the cursed foreigners should be thrown down the shaft; the Russian flag was torn down and a large red flag was run up in its place and flew all day to remind us that the old order was abolished. Messengers left every few hours for the telegraph station at Akmolinsk with tel-

egrams to the Union of Unions reporting the progress of the strike. The Kirghiz were driven away from the pumps; the engine was silent. Tocsan seemed to be making no progress. Our stove had gone out. We filled our samovar with the last remaining drop of water that night and drank our tea in silence. The Doctor considered that Social Democracy had triumphed and recommended surrender. I talked long and earnestly with Kusain and when he left I knew that he would work hard that night. Tocsan was as inscrutable as ever.

The outlook next morning was extremely dreary. The stove was cold, the house was cold, there was no water for tea and there is very little comfort on a cold morning in a cold crust of bread. Snow was falling outside and the red flag was fluttering insolently. Kusain came in for a minute and reported that Topornin had spent the night issuing new wage books to the men, giving them double pay and starting off each man's book with a credit of twenty roubles; that he had done the same with the Kirghiz, and that he was going to open the store and distribute to each man goods to this value. This was his bribe, but Kusain continued:

"I doubt if the Kirghiz will take it; they see the mine filling with water, they realize that their means of livelihood are slipping away; be content, Tocsan is not working in vain."

In the street a great crowd was assembling

round the store and there was much noise and confusion; I noticed that the Russians were pressing round the door but that the Kirghiz were standing in an outer circle, quite silent. Topornin came to the store and unlocked the door and began handing out tea and sugar and flour, and fur caps and coats. At first a semblance of order prevailed, but, with whetted appetite, the crowd grew larger and more aggressive, and some bolder spirits began to help themselves to what pleased them most. And Topornin stood on the steps and shouted to the Kirghiz to come and take the flour and tallow, the things they loved so well; but to their everlasting credit be it said, they stood in a circle outside the raging mob of Russians which was besieging the door, and never moved. There they stood, poor things, hungry and cold, braving the storm in their miserable cotton-batting clothes and watched all the good fur coats and the good food going begging for the taking.

I knew then that the Russians had lost their senses and the game, and that this brief triumph would be their last. The crowd was gathering; the Russians were still looting the store, but our Kirghiz workmen were pouring into the street from all sides; their meekness had disappeared, they were growing angry. Kusain rushed in and told me they were taking possession of the mine, the shafts and pumps and were placing fire guards at the principal points. The street was now packed

with a surging mass, swaying to and fro and shouting:

“Kaida Bai, Bai Kaida!” (where is the master). And they surged toward the door of the house, and in an instant it was filled with a roaring, struggling mass of snow-covered, yelling cotton batting, which lifted me on its shoulders, with yells of “Djacksi Bai!” (good master). It was a dramatic moment. Tocsan had not failed us.

In a few minutes a note arrived from Topornin:

To the Director:

The strike is off. Please afford us protection; we are in danger of our lives.

ANDREI TOPORNIN.

The next day Topornin slunk out of the Assumption Copper Mines and was arrested before he reached home.



## FATHER AND SON.

THE gloom in Russia had reached its deepest point in 1906. The Government was irresolute and vacillating. At one moment liberal decrees were promulgated, at the next the Duma was suddenly dissolved. At times it appeared as if the Bureaus were actually encouraging disorders, in order that the Government might have the opportunity of intervening, and, so, appearing in the rôle of the protectress of its children. In all the large towns horrible riots had broken out, the worst of all being at Tomsk, where the rioters set fire to the huge Government building and shot down the employees as they fled from its burning doors. Murder and brutality were everywhere firmly seated in their bloody saddles.

Fortified by the remoteness of our location in the Steppes, we did not fear any trouble with our own regular men, most of whom had worked for years with us and were extremely friendly. But when we were told by the London office that our plans for the new smelting works had been accepted, we knew that we should be obliged to increase our force tenfold, and that, from whatever quarter they came, they would be strangers

to us; and the recent strike at the Assumption Copper Mine was fresh enough in our minds to make us a little nervous about strangers. But we had to hire at least a thousand men to accomplish the work we had planned within a reasonable time. For in Russia or at any rate in our part of Russia, everything is done by hand. First you smelt your iron, then you make your tool, then you cut your tree, then you make the wheels for your cart, then you haul the log and saw it, then you take your axe and cut the tongue on one board and the groove in the other, and so you lay your floor. And the masons follow the same plan, and the lime-burners the same, and a very good piece of work it all is when it is finished. The resourcefulness of such men is simply marvellous; did we need a new boiler, our blacksmith asked for boiler-plate and made one; were we planning a converter, our mechanic made it; in our part of the world, "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" is not true. You start with nothing and end up with a concertina or a converter, according to taste. One day I saw a man slaughtering a sheep and I jauntily said to him:

"Aha; you will have a good supper tonight."

"Nonsense," he said, "I am making a pair of boots."

"Of course," said I, "how stupid of me, the skin will make good boots."

"That is not the way to make boots," and he

looked at me in surprise and pity. "You must take the entrails of the sheep and draw it into fine strings like dombra strings, and with these you can card the wool and then make felt shoes like these. I made these myself," he said, pointing to the pair of felt overshoes on his feet.

In the same manner the Kirghiz are extraordinarily clever along their own line of workmanship. The community starts with the camel, the sheep, the ox and the horse, and from these, as they and their families wander over the Steppes, they evolve their tents, their clothes, their embroideries. Truly it seemed wonderful to us, with our machine-made, ready-to-use and ready-to-wear ideas, to watch how the same results could be accomplished by skilful fingers without machines, and what an extraordinarily high standard of comfort and achievement could be attained with an astonishingly modest standard of cost. After we had contemptuously torn out the old horse whims at the mine and installed our beautiful, smooth-running cages, we never succeeded in lowering our costs to what they had been before the change. Some day the railway will be built into our old hand-made country, but I doubt if the railway will cheapen our standard cost of transportation; eight to nine dollars per long ton for all classes of goods over a haul of four hundred and eighty miles. The Russians have an old chantey song which they sing when they are working in

unison. It is called the Pile Drivers, and runs as follows:

Oh! The Englishman's clever, to lighten his toil  
He invents first one means, then another,  
But when his work's heavy, our son of the soil  
Pulls the oak tree of Russia, his Mother.

Chorus

Hey, you faithful oak tree! Heyho!  
Hey, you leafy one! She's going now!  
She's going now!  
So pull all! Oh, pull all! and Heyho!

It was an inspiration to hear the Russians sing this song and they love so to sing it. It always seemed to me when I heard them, that they were expressing the inevitable destiny of the toil of humanity; when one pile is driven home, the next must be driven and the work is eternal, without end. The musical harmonies of the song are luminous in their depths, wrapped in the beauty and sadness of the minor tone. Work, poetry and music; of these is the Russian made. Whether he is singing *Gospode Pomilui* (Lord have mercy on me) in his church, or singing to his fellow workmen to drive the pile, or calling to his horse to carry him quickly over the long road, the music is the same, the man is the same.

Very pleasant it is, this life of infinite toil, interwoven with the bright threads of music and poetry and dancing, and with a childlike faith in

God. There are many lands where conditions are simple and crude, but there is no country like Russia, where the simplicity of the child lies in the soul and the body of a man. If you wish to understand them you must abandon the cast-iron moulds in which your western thoughts have been bound. If you will take the trouble you will find it well worth while. You will find that the great bearded man, of immense physical endurance, is like a child in his lack of consciousness of self, absence of conventionalities, obedience to impulse, clear directness of thought, love of the primary expressions of nature. Pathetic he is, as a child is pathetic; happy, because he cannot help being happy, but vaguely conscious of the insoluble mystery of life and the Promethean tragedy of human endeavour. But, like a child, in spite of the dignity and purity of his vision, perhaps on account of it, he can be easily led. There is no more tragic picture conceivable than a Russian crowd, swayed first by one leader and then another, following blindly where it is led. Hence most votes in the Duma are unanimous.

But this is not an essay on the Russian people and I must return to the story.

We were, therefore, confronted with the necessity of importing an enormous amount of technical labour, if we expected to complete our smelter plant within a reasonable time; and we felt that the difficulty of importing so much untried

labour and of housing and feeding and, generally speaking, caring for them and their families, would prove the most difficult part of our programme.

We chose the best men available for recruiting agents and assigned them to different districts along the railway; each man had his instructions to furnish his quota of men of the class required.

The arrangements made, I left for London and did not return until June. On leaving the train at Petropavlovsk, it was easy to see that the staff in our office there was uneasy. Our agent was very anxious that I should not linger; he had made all necessary posting arrangements, the troika was waiting at the door, my trusted Kirghiz servant was on the box.

"Why such haste?" I asked. "Cannot I eat some of your fine crawfish and a little meat, and look over your accounts and your copper stocks?"

"Yes, your Honour, you can," said Porfiri Vassilievitch the agent, "but I recommend that you start at once. I hear disquieting rumours from the works. The new workmen are not like the old; they have been fed with vicious doctrines by agitators; their heads are turned; they are told they can have what they want by taking it; I fear the Tomsk Artyel (association) especially: this is composed of a set of desperate men from Tomsk, the same men who attacked the Government building and made that city a place of terror

for weeks. These men should never have been engaged for the new works; they are not seeking work but robbery, and will not stop at bloodshed to get what they want. The rumours which reach me from the works make me uneasy; I recommend, your Honour, that you leave without delay."

We took our places in the carriage at once. "Aida!" (get up) yelled the driver, and off we started at the conventional gallop. We crossed the railway and sped southward. We decided to stop only at alternate stations to avoid the delay of changing horses. Where we did stop, it was only for the bare time necessary to change them. If the samovar was ready we drank a little tea, if it was not, we pushed on without it. The weather was fine, the roads were in good condition, everything was perfect for a quick run. There was no delay at the Post stations, for we were using private post horses and we were well known on the road. One measured post of twenty-six and three-quarter miles we covered in two hours. All night and all the next day we bowled along, and the second day at dawn we stopped at the river Noura and bathed, and reached the works at ten A.M. Four hundred and eighty miles in forty-four hours lapsed time; this, so far as I know, is the record for this trip, except a mythical trip of the Governor General which is treasured in the memories of the local postmen.

Conditions at the works were truly unsatisfactory. The new workmen were daily becoming more insolent; they had terrorized the old workmen and either frightened or cajoled them into submission. They were cleverly taking advantage of all the weak spots in their agreements, some of which had been loosely drawn by our agents when the men were engaged; they had hypnotized the local authorities into a condition of nerveless inaction, and it was evident that the law officers in our district were ready to give away every dollar the company possessed, rather than run the risk of any conflict with such notorious opponents. Even some of our own friends, men who should have been outspoken on our side, were either wavering or had cast their vote on the side of the insurgents. Our old friend the doctor, who had proclaimed the victory of Social Democratic principles at the time of the strike at the copper mine, was openly in accord with them, and the new priest was a serious storm centre, preaching that Christ was the first Socialist. In short, it may be said that they had taken possession of the works and authority had abdicated. The most effective weapon in their large arsenal and one which they were using with deadly effect, was the clause in their agreement which provided for an eight-hour day and double pay for overtime. They had obtained such control of the system that they loafed through eight hours from six till two, and then



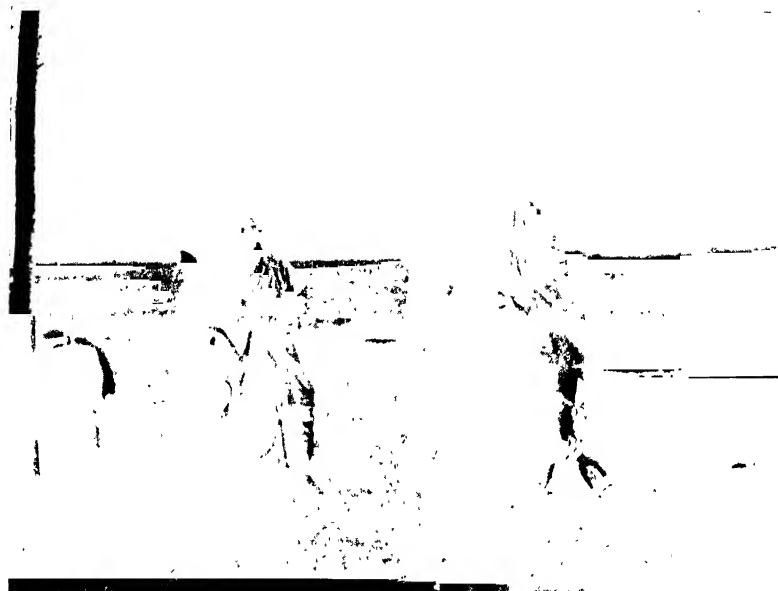
loafed through another four hours, and obtained an allowance of two days' pay for one very poor day of work. They were also using other weapons which they found in the badly drawn agreements, and, as the appetite grows with eating, the situation was becoming intolerable.

I went to the new works where they were building a huge retaining wall, and they certainly were a tough-looking lot. We learned afterwards that our agents had been deceived by the officials at Tomsk. The town authorities had found out that our agents were there looking for workmen, and had conceived the brilliant idea of getting rid of their undesirables by unloading them on us, and our humble agents, overcome by the solicitude and attention of the high dignitaries, had fallen easy victims to their wiles.

The situation was as bad as bad could be and the road looked very dark ahead of us, but it was obvious that the first thing to be done at all costs, was for us to seize the reins and drive the coach ourselves, and hope for luck to help us through. So, after work hours, I posted notices that in future no overtime would be allowed except in cases of absolute necessity. When they read the notices the next morning, a deputation came and said:

"We see notices that there will be no more overtime, but we notify you that we intend to work every day four hours overtime."

"There will be no more overtime," I said.



KIRGHIZ HORSEMEN





"But," they said, "Pavel Dmitrievitch, the manager, with Power of Attorney, says we may work overtime."

"Then let him pay you for it. I will not."

"When our Artyel learns to-night that you have refused to pay us overtime, they will come and force you to pay it."

"That is not in their power," I replied.

"You will see."

In a few minutes the Russian manager arrives and implores me not to take such an unfortunate step. He urges that the men are now working well, that their agreements call for overtime, that we can do nothing against such numbers and such men, and that we shall all be killed and so on.

And the Pristav or Police Agent comes and recommends submission; he assumes that, according to their agreements, they have right on their side, that times are very difficult, that we must avoid all cause for scandal, that the consequences may be very serious.

On counting up our forces, I found that I had the support of our three Englishmen and one Russian, a minor official but a faithful friend, Peter Sergeivitch. The Russian manager was a gelatinous mass, a very wobbly support. He would have come out openly on the men's side, but knew such action would mean his prompt dismissal.

Our house stood on a level terrace, and, by day-break the next morning, I could hear the scuffle of

footsteps outside. The men were gathering; first in little groups, then in larger ones; their talk was not nice and their voices were not nice.

Peter Sergeivitch came in.

"You had better get ready to see the men. I will stay with you, you will need all the support you can get."

"Thank you, Peter; call Duncan and Herbert, make haste, there is no time to lose."

There was a large empty room in our house and we waited there for the storm to break. By six o'clock the terrace was packed with a noisy crowd and a dozen men burst into the room where we were waiting, followed by all who could force their way in. The crowd was so strong that we were forced into a corner of the room. There was not a pleasant expression in the whole gang. I demanded immediately why they were not at work.

"Give us our overtime," they cried.

"No, no more overtime," I said.

At this the whole room yelled and it was difficult to hear exactly what they were saying; but the drift of it all was, that we had broken our agreement with the men, and that, thereby, we must at once pay them in full for their whole season's work, and provide them with transportation to their homes, and free subsistence till they were ready to start.

We were standing in a little group in a corner of the room with our backs to the wall, the crowd was

confronting us in a small circle drawn around us.

At first I attempted to reason with them, but this was a useless effort; they just yelled me down. From time to time excited men forced their way through the crowd, shook their fists at us, demanded money and shouted, till others forced them back so that they could shout themselves. I abandoned all effort to reason with them; it is useless to reason with a maniac. The noise quieted down at dinner time, and the Pristav and the Russian manager came up and implored us to give way. But apart from questions of policy, we were growing obstinate; you cannot stand before a yelling, hooting crowd for six hours, with its fist thrust into your face, without becoming "something," and it took the form of obstinacy with us. After dinner they came on in greater force and with greater vehemence than ever; during a brief lull I told them what our decision was: first, that they were all discharged, second, that we would send them home on certain terms, not necessary to relate.

I knew what a storm the proposals would raise, but the lines had to be drawn and the fight must be fought, so the sooner the better. For some hours, all through the long, weary afternoon, we stood with our backs to the corner, looking into the eyes of the angry mob, while the terrace was packed to overflowing. A moment's weakening would have invited disaster, but the merciful darkness came at last, and hunger scattered the crowd,

All night long the crowd roamed the streets with such cries as: "We filled the streets of Tomsk with blood, and who is there who will prevent us here?" "Cut the accursed foreigners into sausages," and so on. Our own friendly workmen were in a hopeless minority, and we had closed the works so as not to expose them to unnecessary insult, but we did what we could to post guards, and the night passed without incident.

The next day the storm broke again as the sun came up, and again our little corner of the reception room was the storm centre. But we felt safe now; we had taken their measure and they knew that they were beaten. As the afternoon wore on they began to talk reason, and by evening we had arranged the terms of the truce. The next day we began hiring wagons for their removal, and day by day the agitators were removed from the works, a hundred one day, two hundred the next day, and so on.

After the worst men were safely off the premises the works resumed operations, but we did not take on again our old men who had joined the strikers, and they were becoming uneasy. It began to dawn upon their minds that they had made a mistake. So a group of them came to me one day:

"Barin," said Dmitrii the carpenter, "the new works are progressing very slowly."

"Yes," I said, "you all refused to work and, of course, we are all suffering from your foolishness."

"Yes, Barin, we were very foolish; but Ivan Konstantinovitch of the Tomsk Artyel, told us we could get two days' pay for one day's work and we believed him."

"And now you see how foolish you were."

"Yes, we see it all plainly now. But you, Barin, will not refuse to employ us when you need the work so badly."

"Yes, you are discharged; you have brought all this worry on the works and you must now go back to Little Russia."

"Very well, if the Barin says so, we must go, but we will be back early next spring."

"No you will not: you will none of you work here ever again."

"Oh, Barin, do not talk so unkindly; we like you very much, and we are sorry we listened to those Tomsk scoundrels, and we shall all be back next year."

"No, you will not, you will never work here again."

"Oh, Barin, we shall all come back in the spring with our wives and our families, and when you see us all here with nothing to eat and no place for our families to sleep, you will give us work, we know you will."

"No, you won't, you won't, you won't!"

"Oh yes, Barin, we will all come back next year, and we like you very much and will always work for you. But now we must say farewell,



for the carpenters have finished the repairs to the wagons. Barin, will you please give us an order to the hay yard that we may have plenty of hay to put in our wagons, so that the women and children may be comfortable? I am afraid that the horses which the Barin has hired for us from that rascal Tokpai, are very thin, and it will be many weeks before we reach the railway; we men can walk, but it is hard for the women, especially those whose babes are very young."

"Can the women and young children endure so long a journey?" I asked.

"We live in the sight of God and our lives are in his hands; if he so wills it, they will be able to endure. Farewell, Barin; when the wagons pass by, you will come to the corner and say 'Farewell' to us."

Toward the close of the day a long stream of wagons filed by. Little wooden things, held together with wooden pegs, each drawn by a little horse buried under a huge douga or yoke. Each horse follows immediately the wagon ahead of him: when one stops, they all stop; when one moves, they all move. The women and children were crowded in the wagons, the men were walking by the side.

"Farewell, Barin, till we meet again."

"Goodbye, Dmitrii Iliitch, may your road be spread before you like a table cloth!"

What pathetic figures they were, wandering

out into the setting sun, sorrow and resignation on their faces! And we needed the men so badly for our construction programme. It all seemed so unnecessary, and yet it had to be; and the divine light of intelligence was in those rough faces as they disappeared over the hill and waved a last "Prostchai, (Farewell)!"

At any rate it was a relief to have it all over, and the works once more settled down to the routine which had been so rudely interrupted.

Two or three days after Dmitrii's party had left, I was surprised to see his brother Konstantin and his two sons and two or three other workmen, standing one morning in the hallway of my house.

"Good heavens, Konstantin, has there been an accident? Where is Dmitrii?"

"The Barin does not understand; our party did not leave with Dmitrii."

"And pray, why not?"

"Partly because our wagons were not ready, partly because Stepan had cut his leg so badly with an axe that he could not travel."

"Konstantin, I want you to understand that I cannot have you and your families hanging round the works, eating meat and flour, while you earn no money; you must leave at once, do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear, but we cannot leave till evening, because our wagons will not be ready till then. Barin, it is very dull staying here; there is nothing

for us to do while the carpenters are busy on the wagons."

"Well, if you find it so dull, why do you not go away?" I said.

"You know, Barin, that a father cannot leave his son when his son is hurt and cannot walk; besides, the wagons are not ready. Yes, it is very dull, but if the Barin were to give us a bottle of vodka, it would help us to pass the time," said Konstantin.

"Nonsense! You know I do not keep vodka in the house except on holidays."

"Still, the Barin probably has at least one bottle saved in the cupboard under the floor."

And more to get rid of him than anything else, I groped in the cupboard and found one of the large bottles of vodka known as tchetverts. Old Konstantin's eyes glistened when he saw the size of the bottle, but I said to him:

"I can only give you half the bottle, the rest I must keep for myself; perhaps I shall find things dull, too."

So I poured out half of the bottle and they took it and walked away.

Toward evening Konstantin again appeared at my house.

"Good Heavens," I said, "not gone yet?"

"Not yet, Barin, but everything is now ready: the wagons are here, all ready to start. Stepan asks you to come and wish him goodbye."

So I walk to where the wagons are standing, and the little group of men hold out their hands and say farewell, and make me shake hands with the children, and finally I see Stepan who sits in one of the wagons, with his leg bound with a blood-stained bandage.

"Goodbye, Stepan; I am sorry your leg is hurt so badly."

"It is nothing, Barin," said Stepan, "but I cannot walk. Farewell, we will all be back in the spring!"

I had not the heart to argue the point with him then and simply said:

"Farewell, Stepan; God be with you and your families."

The whips cracked, the wagons creaked, the little cavalcade slowly moved off and disappeared over the hill. I hurried away and walked back to the house. I was sorry to see so many good men leave us, we needed them so badly; but it had to be done and it was a relief to have it all over. I sat down and began turning over the plans of the new works, and was soon absorbed in other thoughts. I heard some steps outside.

"Barin," a voice called from the outside.

"I wish to goodness I could ever have five minutes undisturbed!"

I went to the door, and to my amazement and annoyance there was Konstantin standing, hat in hand.

"Konstantin," I cried, "what the devil are you doing here? Be off at once!"

"Barin, do not be angry; you know I told you how a father should never be separated from his son; in the same way, Barin, one half of a bottle of vodka should never be divided from the other. Will you not give us the other half of that bottle which you gave us this morning?"

I accepted the inevitable and drew out the remains of the bottle from the cupboard.

"Now, Konstantin," I said, "take it; and if I see your face again I will call the Pristav and have you arrested."

"Goodbye, Barin!" The old man shuffled off and disappeared over the hill, in the direction of the creaking wagons.

"Goodbye father and goodbye son," I said to myself, and turning to the plans, resumed my work. Next spring, as they had foretold, they all came back.

## EASTER DAY.

**K**IRIL IVANOVITCH FALALEI was the name of our village priest.

It is inherently impossible, in a few written words, to define the soul of a people. The most that can be done is to throw some rays of light on certain paths along which it travels, and possibly to indicate some of the motives which urge it this way or that. The reader may then, if he wishes, attempt to gather up this information and mould it into a formula in his mind. He will be wiser if he leaves it alone, and remains satisfied to breathe the perfume of the flowers, which line the path of his enquiry, without insisting on a strict definition of its bewildering angles. For, if he is determined on a strict survey, what instrument has ever been made, which, in the hands of different observers, will guide them to the same goal, when they are attempting to follow the path of the soul, in the labyrinth of human desires and dreams? Each one tilts the instrument with the bias of his own character; to one, a path leads to the Divine Presence; to another, to destruction; to the large majority it loses itself in clouds of mystery.

Nevertheless, no one can mix with the Russian

people without being profoundly impressed by the strength of the tie which binds them to their religion and their Church. Whether this is due to the mystic quality inherent in the Russian mind, or to the paternal care of the Government, which is cause, and which is effect, these questions will probably be answered by each one, according to the angle at which he holds his instrument.

But, undoubtedly, all observers will agree on these two points: first, the Russian's childlike faith in God; second, the minute paternalism with which every act of the individual is surrounded. To the writer, it seems that the Russian form of paternalism derives its force from below and not from above. It comes less from the desire of those in high authority to control the action of the masses, than from the desire of the latter to impose on other shoulders than their own, the responsibility of their actions. On the spiritual side, they rest their faith in God; on the practical side, they rely, for guidance, on someone in higher authority than themselves. The logical conclusion is: the authority of God in all things spiritual, and the authority of the "Gosudar" (Czar) in all things temporal.

Furthermore, this distinction, between the spiritual and the physical needs of man, is an expression drawn from our Western attitude of mind. With the Russian, the spiritual is not far removed from the physical, and it must be added that the

physical is not very far removed from the spiritual. The presence of God is an ever-living idea in his mind and the ministrations of His church are as natural to him as any other physical function. God is not for him a remote being, to whom he may appeal in an emergency, who may be pleased or angry, who interrupts or forwards his personal affairs. He is the Primal Force who makes all things move, the Power which makes the grain sprout, and the sun rise, and which will, in due course, lay him under the earth. God is the Cosmic Power, and he bows his head to it and worships. He recognizes the Power in every simple act of life; if he is on his way to his work, he passes through the church and bows to the Divinity; if he takes food, he first bows before His image; if he comes into your house, he must first cross himself beneath the Ikon in your room, before he salutes you. He considers the Church as the symbol of His power, and the priest as the medium between himself and God. There is no personal relation between the priest and layman; in himself the priest is unimportant, a mere instrument of Divine Power. He may be reeling with vodka when he holds aloft the Cross, but this is nothing to the congregation, which sees, not the priest, but only the mystery of which he is the messenger. Although Mercury was a thief, he, nevertheless, carried the messages of Jupiter.

The former owners of our mines were of the old



school of mine operators of Yekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains, persons of great piety, and they had built a church many years before our arrival. It was a pretty little church, very nicely decorated inside, standing conspicuously on the highest ground in the neighbourhood. When the Governor General or other dignitaries arrived at the works, they always first drove to the church and paid their devotions to God, before driving to the village where we were waiting for them, holding the traditional bread and salt, which symbolized the hospitable welcome of the villagers. When we took charge of the property, we followed in the footsteps of our predecessors, and helped toward the support of the church in every way possible.

Kiril Ivanovitch Falalei was a man of remarkable appearance; the image of Christ as the Tyrolean peasant actors attempt to show him to us on the stage of the Passion Plays. His features were extraordinarily fine, his hair fell in sweeping waves of Titian red over his shoulders, and his large blue eyes had a deep and dreamy look. Incidentally, he was a Cossack, a wonderful horseman and athlete and a considerable, very considerable, drinker. His home life was not a model; but, as I said above, a Russian priest's personality has nothing to do with his priesthood. After he left us, we had two priests in quick succession; one the socialist Protopopoff, and the other Timofei, a man of quiet parts and some education; but I

doubt if either of them were as successful as priests as the wild Cossack, Falalei, who to his other accomplishments added that of music; being a fine singer and a lover of music, especially the music of the Russian church. It was a revelation to hear him sing the "Little Mother Volga." Like all Russians he loved the minor key, and the melodious harmonies of Beethoven were not at all to his taste. I remember one night, while some of the Pastoral Symphony was being played, seeing him rise in great agitation and implore the player to stop playing in the major key, for such music drove him mad.

He was one of the leading voices amongst those who usually came to our house on Saturday evening. They would drop in to supper, half a dozen or a dozen of them, and, after the meal was over, first one began to sing, then another joined in, then all; and the singing rose and fell until the old day was exchanged for a young one. I do not recall, in all my life, a more impressive moment than when Theodor Ilich, the Cantor, would sing Pushkin's wonderful words: "At the last moment of my life." Theodor was a huge peasant, whose devotion to religion was inextricably interwoven with his love of music. As he stood up in his high boots, his blue cotton shirt gathered at the waist with a cord, he appeared the very ideal of unconscious childlike faith, while his grand voice sang the poignant words of his favourite song. He might

have been the original of the lay brother who plied the ferry for the monks in Tchekov's story, "The Night before Easter."

Lent was near and we all determined to have a wonderful service on the night before Easter. The Russian Lent is something very real, a real season of self-denial. Husbands may not kiss their wives; no meat is touched; no milk or butter or eggs are used; of course vodka is forbidden. As the time draws near the Passion week, the rules are more tightly drawn; the careful ones grow stricter and the careless ones observe a certain measure of restraint; and, during the Holy Week itself, the self-restraint becomes almost austere. They impose unusual tasks of work upon themselves; the women clean the inside of the house and the men the outside, and work on the preparation of the Easter feast goes on late into the night. For the "feast," which has survived for us only as a word, is a real feast for them. Such cooking and preparation! The wonderfully cooked fishes and meats and Easter cakes two feet high begin to accumulate on the shelves, and look very tempting to their abstemious mouths. And every night the choir meets and practises its music for *the* service of the year.

While the orthodox Russian was preparing himself by abstinence, in a spirit of mystical devotion, for his Easter festival, we could see the Mahomedan Kirghiz preparing themselves in their cold

literal fashion, for their great feast. Like the Christian, but in a spirit of utilitarianism and not of idealism, the Mahommedan has adopted the excellent rule of a periodic fast; we usually hear of it as the month of Ramadan, but the Kirghiz called it Oorazah. The period of the fast is a movable one, occurring every year later than in the preceding year. During the period of one moon, the Kirghiz are not allowed to touch food or drink from sunrise to sundown. When the fast occurs in the short winter days, the period of abstinence between sunrise and sunset is not very long; but, in the long hot summer days, the Kirghiz working around the furnaces, endured little less than torture as, for four weeks, they toiled through the long day without food and without water. As the dromedary's humps become limp and flabby after a long period of work without food, so the poor Kirghiz, toiling round the scorching furnaces, became weaker and flabbier as the fast progressed. Probably Mahommed never contemplated such work as this, when he prescribed such a rigorous ordinance. It is one thing to sit at your tent door and watch the sun travel across the sky and quite another thing to tap the blistering copper from a white-hot furnace.

The Kirghiz fast has not any fixed date of ending. When the new moon shows itself in the western sky their fast is over, but not till then. If the sky be cloudy and the moon obscured,

they must prolong their fast from day to day, until they see the crescent in the evening and obtain their release. As their system of the dissemination of knowledge is very imperfect, and as Marcus Ward publishes no Kirghiz calendars, their ignorance of the exact time when the moon should appear, is pathetic. There was a natural terrace facing the west, near the smelter, and here, two or three days before it was due, the Kirghiz would gather toward sundown, looking in vain for the hoped-for sign of their deliverance. As the sky grew dark and no moon appeared they would turn wearily away and walk down the hill.

On Good Friday the service in the Russian church begins and is practically continuous till the hour of the Resurrection. The story of the Cross is partly acted, and partly told and sung. All of Saturday the body of Christ lies on a bier in front of the altar and devout worshippers pass round it, kissing the forehead of their Saviour crucified, as they pass. Toward the evening of Saturday the crowd begins to gather, and we move with it toward the little church on the hill facing the east. As we go, we pass the terrace where the Kirghiz are wont to gather to silently watch for their longed-for sign. How close together in this far-off desert are these two hills, and by what an impassable gulf are they separated! On the one are the Mahommedans, straining their eyes to the west to see the pale



THE LITTLE CHURCH ON THE HILL  
Camel train leaving the works for Petropavlovsk



light of their crescent shine, and on the other are the Christians watching the east to see their star arise. The line is sharply drawn which separates them, and, yet, what a strong tie binds them, if they only knew it!

We enter the church and buy our candles: large ones to place in the holders before the images of the saints, small tapers to hold in our hands.

The service proceeds.

For hours we stand while new crowds keep coming in, till the church is packed to suffocation. Each one lights his taper and the crush is so great that he must hold it above his head, lest he burn his neighbour. The singing of the choir rises and falls, the deep voice of the Cantor rolls through the building and the constantly repeated "Gospode pomilui," (Lord have mercy upon us), becomes fascinating in its constant reiteration. The music is like nothing but itself. Those who have heard it know its power and its pathos. Toward midnight the singing ceases, a deep hush prevails while the Body of the Saviour is carried behind the altar. The silence is intense. The little tapers glow like stars in a golden wave which fills the church. There is absolute stillness.

Christos voskress! Christ has risen! The bells crash out, cannon outside the church are fired; from behind the altar comes a procession with the priest in his gorgeous cassock of white and gold, bearing the empty coffin. Down the church it



marches and out into the starry night, while the bells clash for joy, and round after round is fired from the cannon.

Christos voskress! Yes, undoubtedly Christ has risen!

When the priest comes back from his triumphal march he finds the people grouped in a circle, all kneeling on the floor. The women are in front, dressed in bright reds and blues, with embroidered kerchiefs round their heads. They are holding before them the bread and cake which they have been preparing and waiting for so long, that God may bless it and that they and their families may be blessed of Him. Behind them stand the men, full-bearded, erect, serious of mien; in the centre the Priest and the Cantor. Hundreds of wax tapers illuminate the scene with a soft mysterious glow.

The priest passes round the circle, sprinkling the food with holy water. And, because the church is small and there is not room for many inside, the others are gathered around the church, each one kneeling—waiting for the blessing of God upon his bread. Then they all go to their own houses and each man breaks the bread, which has been blessed, with his own family, and everyone is then ready for the visiting and gay feasting which follow.

Our own house is filled to overflowing with the mountains of food which have been cooked dur-

ing the last week, and bottles with liquors of every hue are filled and refilled and filled again. Alike between master and man, workman and boss, *Christos voskress* is the universal greeting. It is very democratic and a pretty sight, before too many get too drunk. But drink, alas, does not even respect the resurrection of Christ. Certainly restraint and the minor key are more beautiful to look upon than intemperance played in the major.

Similarly the Mahommedans will celebrate the end of their fast in an orgy of sodden meat and sour milk. This also is not a lovely spectacle and the smell is overpowering.

## SIMPLE ADDITION.

**I**F you have been trained in the western world you will probably regard the addition of numbers as the simplest of all arithmetical processes, a mere matter of arranging your figures in an orderly column and then adding them up. But directly you cross the Russian frontier you will at once notice that everyone who has to do with figures has, at his side, a little wooden frame across which are strung thirteen wires. On each wire are strung little wooden balls which move freely on the wires. The balls on the ten top wires are white and on the two bottom wires are black. The thirteenth wire between the white and black balls is merely used to define the separation between the two colours. In Russia, the white balls represent the roubles, the black represent the kopeks. Such counting-boards are universal. If you make a few purchases at a shop, the assistant clicks the balls back and forth and reads off the total from the board. The trained office man never says two and two make four. He takes his board and throws off two balls to the right, then again two, then observes that he has four balls, and so announces the total.

In a large counting-house or bank the rattle of the clicking balls is a characteristic sound, just as the presence of an attendant, constantly walking between the rows of clerks, distributing glasses of tea among them, is a characteristic sight.

The counting-board is a Chinese device, adopted before figures were known and afterwards persisted in with the conservatism of the East. The Russians have adopted it, as they have adopted so many eastern customs and thoughts.

It is astonishing how quickly and accurately a practised man can manipulate the noisy, nimble balls, but this applies to all processes where the human brain and fingers are employed. A skilful English bank clerk can add up the three columns of pounds, shillings and pence, simultaneously. The counting-board has one obvious advantage; if a clerk is interrupted in adding a series of figures, the total is preserved on the counting-board until he is ready to resume. But on the whole, it is probable that properly equipped men would do better to throw it away and take up the pencil, while possibly, incompetent men can do better work with it than without it. In any case, its use produces a deplorably careless and untidy habit of bookkeeping, which in itself is a bad result.

In our office, it was a source of much good-natured jesting between our English accountant, who was a marvel with figures, and the Russian bookkeepers. His delight, therefore, at the help-

lessness of the Russian cashier, which is developed at the close of this story, was unbounded.

The foundation of this story is as follows:

Our works were the owners of a certain safe, and on the morning of September the fifteenth, 1905, the cashier, a bonded official of the Guild of Accountants in Petersburg, announced that during the previous night, the safe had been bodily stolen from the office.

"Last night," he said, "I checked up my cash and, after counting it, I found I had upwards of fourteen thousand roubles. I locked the safe as usual. This morning the safe is not in its usual place; it has entirely disappeared. You must come quickly; the safe weighs nearly a ton; it is impossible that the robbers should have carried it far."

We ran to the office and already the usual crowd of loafers was gathered round the door. The cashier had spoken truly; the safe had vanished. The night had been stormy; if the robbers had left any tracks, they had been utterly obliterated by the rain and sleet. In a few minutes the police officer was on the spot and immediately began to write his protocol. Now the protocol in Russia is a wonderful piece of machinery; it is the one officially recognized panacea for all human woes. If you lose your money, the officer establishes a protocol; if a mad dog bites you, another protocol; if your neighbour trespasses on your land, another; if

your boiler explodes, another; always and everywhere, a protocol; if you derive no comfort from these protocols, the fault must be yours, for they are always accepted by everyone else as the final solution of all difficulties; the ultimate expression of the genius of man, who tries, through them, to shift the responsibility for unpleasant events from his own shoulders to those of another. For our part, we had absolutely no faith in protocols; but custom and respect for authority compelled us to wait for the completion of this one, with as much patience as possible. At one time, it seemed as if the whole protocol machinery would break down, because the cashier could not remember the exact amount of the cash which he had counted the night before. Some one suggested that his books would show how much money he had on the evening before the robbery; but the police officer was not to be hurried into foolish conclusions of this kind, and said:

“Your books may show what you should have had; the question is what money you actually did have.”

This idea was greeted with great applause, and actually turned the suspicion of the loafers toward the cashier; the policeman saw that he had made a point and was delighted to give such a quick proof of his wonderful astuteness.

The cashier became confused and retired to his counting-board.

After much delay the protocol was finished and the officer left. He felt his day's work was well done and left us to our thoughts and to such action as we could devise.

It was a most disagreeable situation; the only really disagreeable event which occurred during the five years of my stay at the works. A self-contained community, living in a remote corner of the earth, with practically no communication with the outside world, acquires the attributes of a completely self-sufficient organism; the identity of its various members becomes indistinct; it moves and feels as a whole, and when one member becomes deficient, the whole organism is thrown out of working order. The robbery had changed our organism suddenly from an animate whole into numerous inanimate parts. Each one suspected his neighbour and everyone agreed in suspecting the cashier. They were all exceedingly blue, for they knew that the money was gone which was to have provided for the payroll on the following day. The life seemed to have gone out of the whole play, the clerks turned drearily to their counting-boards, and we began to take steps to find the safe. Toward evening it was found hidden in some bushes at the bottom of the hill, with the door open, the lock intact, and quite empty. A few copper coins lay scattered on the ground around it. As the lock was in perfect working order, it was evident that it must have been opened with a key;

the cashier always carried round his neck the only key known to be in existence. It was absurd, however, to suppose that the cashier had robbed the safe, for he was fully bonded by his Guild, and the Guild watched its bonded members like a hawk. He then stated that on the occasion of his last trip to Akmolinsk for cash, he had entrusted his key to a certain clerk whom we will designate by the name of Ivan, and that this Ivan had a brother in the machine shop: "was it not possible that the machinist brother had manufactured a duplicate key while the cashier was in Akmolinsk?" It certainly was extremely possible and, on the whole, extremely likely. So suspicion fell heavily upon Ivan and all his kin, and Ivan's behaviour did not lessen it. His women all began to appear in new hats and in clothes fashioned after the latest modes of Pavlodar. Rumours began to circulate that Ivan's uncle had died and that he and his family would shortly return to their homes, and live on the fruitful memory of their kinsman. By bad luck, he was connected by marriage with our police officer, and it seemed impossible for us to induce the officer to take any effective initiative toward the recovery of the money. If he did take any step it was only after a protracted argument extended over several days, during which time Ivan was given every opportunity to successfully meet our move.

We had very good means of knowing who came



into and who went out of the works, and we were quite confident that the money was not far away, and we ought to be able to find it, if we could only spur the police officer to coöperate with us in some intelligent action. After much argument we induced him to let us search Ivan's house; and we marched down in state for the performance; a very silly performance it was, carried out amidst the abuse and jeers of his family. Of course we found nothing, though we tore up the floor and examined every crack and cranny; even the police officer was laughing at us and we retired in confusion. Later we heard that a monstrous baking of large loaves of bread was proceeding at Maria's, the baker's shop, and with our police officers, after giving the usual three days' notice, we marched down in strong force and cut open all the poor woman's bread. Another dreary farce. And so days and weeks passed, and, while we still felt sure the money had not left the works, we were no nearer to it than on the day of the robbery. December was drawing near, and we loudly proclaimed that the Christmas holidays would not be worth calling holidays if the money were not found; there would be no festivities, not even any vodka. And at this, all faces grew very long and everyone suddenly acquired a personal interest in the money, and the suggestion was made that we send for the mirovoi soodya or judge of the district criminal court.

He arrived in due course, a dapper little gentleman from Poland; he had travelled abroad and was different from the large, bearded men we usually saw. I think his mother had been French, and he himself spoke a little French, which he was very fond of injecting into his talk, gesticulating with nervous energy all the time. We christened him "À la fin des fins," as he used this peculiar phrase between every sentence, as some people say, "you know."

He told us that he was thirty-five years old, had been a noisy revolutionary, and had been exiled to Siberia ten years ago; that he was thankful for this and that he had no wish to go back to Russia. He had served two years in the jail at Omsk.

"But," I said, "how can you occupy the position of judge, if you were in jail for two years?"

"I don't understand your point; am I not a lawyer, *à la fin des fins*?"

"Yes," I said, "but you served two years in jail."

"Quite true," he replied, "and for two years after that I could not leave Omsk, then for two years I could not leave the province and, *à la fin des fins*, now I am quite free."

"Was it not terrible," I asked, "for you to be in jail?"

"Not at all," he said. "I was allowed to continue practising law. On rule days I used to come out and enter the pleas of my clients, and try my

cases. At any time when necessary, for instance if my client had some notes which required protesting, I used to leave the jail and, *à la fin des fins*, when my business was over, I returned. I enjoyed my stay in jail very much, everyone was very kind to me. But my dear sir, you seem surprised. Pray tell me why you are surprised?"

"I will freely confess to you, my dear judge, that, in our country, a two-year jail sentence is not usually considered a qualification for the bench."

"*À la fin des fins*, that is because your treatment of prisoners is so illogical. You consider that a man who has served a term in jail is disgraced for life; we consider that he has expiated his offense. It causes us much surprise that your nation, which is so civilized, should treat its prisoners so cruelly."

"We treat our prisoners cruelly!" I exclaimed. "They are treated with great care, have good lodging and good food and have good medical attention."

"Yes, my friend, their bodies may be well cared for, but their souls are oppressed with humiliation, and their minds are tortured; your prisoners are not even allowed to speak to one another; when they enter jail they are considered to have lost their humanity. I believe it is true that in certain cases they are shut up alone and never allowed to see another human being. *À la*

fin des fins, we could not be so cruel as that. And now, whenever you please, I am ready to question the accused."

And somewhat in the form of a French Juge d'Instruction, he examined the accused, examined the witnesses, heard our story, talked long with the police officer, and finally told us that he could see no cause for confining the accused, but that he would command them to appear at the next term of court and stand their trial.

So we were no nearer our money than before.

As the days passed we became more and more convinced that our suspicions were correct; that the money had never left the works; that Ivan was the principal mover in the plot and the police officer knew every move that was being made. But we had drawn our lines pretty tightly round the village and it was growing more and more difficult for the culprits to dispose of the money. Public opinion, too, was asserting itself. All joy had left the works, and it was quite plain that there were to be no Christmas festivities unless the money were found. The thought of a vodka-less Christmas was becoming intolerable: the pressure on the police officer was growing strong. Probably, also, both they and the officer were growing nervous. In the beginning, no doubt, it had seemed to them that the only difficult thing was to gain possession of the money; the difficulty of disposing of it had not occurred to them.

Now they saw how valueless money was in itself, and that the risks of holding it were daily growing greater. The police officer became more and more confidential, almost mysterious; he began to drop hints that all would come right in the end; that he had been hot on the trail for several weeks and that he was sure of success. We began to draw glowing pictures of the honour he would achieve in his career if success crowned his efforts, and we also emphasized the possible financial rewards which would follow the discovery of the money.

One day, assuming his most professional manner, he drew from his pocket a crudely drawn sketch, which he said he had found in the corridor of the hospital. This purported to be a plan of an outlying portion of the works, showing with a black dot the spot where the money should be. We spent the afternoon of a bitterly cold day looking over the ground, and came back chilled to the bone and convinced that the policeman was making fun of us.

On the twelfth of December, about four in the afternoon, the policeman told us that he had located the money within a certain area, and that we must all go and look for it, for he was sure we should find it. And he led us out in the gathering dusk for about a mile, and waving his hand, said: "It lies somewhere within this circle; see that nobody comes in or out; it is hidden

somewhere here." It was bitterly cold, with a fierce wind blowing, and we wandered back and forth hunting for the treasure. The colder we grew, the more angry we became with the policeman, and we finally decided that we were being fooled by him and came back home, utterly disgusted and worn out. We were sitting disconsolately in a circle round the table, when there arose a most terrible hubbub outside, the doors burst open, and in rushed the Kirghiz, Bai Mahomet, in a frenzy of excitement, who cried out "Nashol, nashol," (it is found!) and sank breathless on the floor. A great crowd was fighting for entry, and the policeman pushed his way in and emptied a sackful of notes in disorder on the table.

Everybody's face was wreathed with smiles. "Barin, we will have a good holiday now!" "Barin, a tchetvert of vodka for me!" "Barin, two bottles for me and three bottles of zapikanka, don't forget!"

Then the counting of the notes began; each person at the table received an armful, and had to sort them and count them. When all were ready, the cashier, being designed by nature for such work, wrote down the figures as each person read out his list. "Now please, Mr. Cashier, will you kindly add it up?"

"Where is your counting-board?" said the cashier. I had to guiltily own that I had none.

"No counting-board," he continued sharply. "How can I add up this list of figures without one?"

I looked over his shoulder at the long list of figures sprawling confusedly over the paper. He was quite right, no one could add figures in that shape. I suggested that our English auditor should rewrite the figures in proper form and add them up; but that seemed to hurt the feelings of our expert cashier, bonded by the Guild of Accountants at Petersburg, to such an extent that I hastily withdrew the suggestion.

"Still," I said, "it would be interesting to know how much money there is." The cashier was much put out; it was obviously his business to tell us, but without his counting-board he was utterly at sea.

"I never saw a respectable house before, without a counting-board," said he. "It is ridiculous for us to be sitting here with the money before us and not know how much there is."

"There does seem to be some humour in the situation," I said, but the remark was frowned upon; it seemed to cast a chill upon them all. The Russian does not care for humour; in fact, in the sense of humour he is almost lacking.

I left the situation for the cashier to solve.

"I have not the key of the office with me," the cashier said. "Who lives near here who has a counting-board?"

Finally he rose, put on his coat and said he would go to the house of Ivan Konstantinovitch and fetch his, and left us.

A dead silence fell on us all; we sat staring at the money.

"The science of arithmetic presents many problems," I said.

This remark was also received in cold silence. The minutes passed; a quarter of an hour passed, then half an hour.

"Is it likely that the cashier will return to-day?" I queried, but received no answer. They were exasperated to see their much-beloved counting system breaking down.

Finally the cashier came in, waving his board in triumph. He sat down and as the numbers were called off, his fingers rapidly clicked the balls to and fro on the wires. He gaily called off the total. The counting-board had been vindicated.

The money was nearly, but not all, recovered; sufficiently nearly so, to let the employees feel that all suspicion was once more at rest, and that they were all justified in ordering double the usual quantity of vodka for Christmas.



## A COPPER KETTLE.

ONE day, the smelter naryadtchik, or foreman, walked into our office and said that he noticed signs of restlessness amongst the Kirghiz furnace-men and that he believed they were preparing for a strike.

"You are silly," I said, "the idea is absurd; in the first place, the Kirghiz do not want anything which they have not already, and, secondly, they are quite incapable of organizing for any concerted action."

"That sounds all right," said the foreman, "and would be all right in ordinary times, but they have been very much upset by the example of the Russians during the last year, and I think they feel they ought to be in the fashion, and call a strike themselves. Bad example is very contagious."

The Kirghiz were employed around the smelter for the rough unskilled work. The word "unskilled" is the word usually employed for this class of work, but in reality no work is "unskilled," strictly speaking. Some work requires less judgment than others; but in any work, no matter

how rough, the difference between practised labourers and raw hands makes the whole difference between success and failure, no matter how watchful the foreman may be.

The presence of the Kirghiz at the works at all was an anomaly in the Kirghiz régime, for, by nature, the Kirghiz hate manual work, hate to dirty their hands, hate regular hours, hate discipline, will have nothing to do with it. But the works had been in operation for fifty years and more, and there had grown up with it and in it, a body of Kirghiz who had adopted the life and to whom it seemed a natural mode of existence. At the start, they were no doubt very poor, probably considered undesirables by their own kin, and life was very hard for them. I suppose that the idea of a regular supply of tallow and brick tea appeared very attractive, and they succumbed to the temptation and put their names on the payroll. With their brother Kirghiz they lost caste; but, as the works grew in age and size, they became used to it and their children grew up in it and gradually more and more of them joined the ranks, until, with furnace-men, copper-miners, coal-miners, lime-burners, brick-makers and carriers, there were over five thousand of them working for us. Especially since our arrival and the development of the works on a much enlarged scale, the working Kirghiz had grown in number and power and in respect for the dignity of work

for work's sake. They were actually beginning to take a pride in their technical responsibilities and in some respects their fidelity was extraordinary.

The fidelity of the carriers was especially remarkable. Once a Kirghiz (unable of course to read or write) has touched the pen with which you sign his name at the bottom of a bill of lading, the goods you have entrusted to him are as safe as if they were in the vault of a modern bank building. Poor ragged bundle of cotton batting, he stands outside the office door waiting for his precious bill of lading, he and his party of five or six ragged bundles like himself, with a string of forty or fifty camels. Each camel is tied to a light wooden sled pinned together with wooden pins. They have just come up from the copper room, where each sled has been loaded with bar copper wrapped in fibre matting, and made fast with rope or rawhide. The animals are huge and unwieldy, desperately hard to control; no one but a Kirghiz can do anything with them at all. But one virtue they have, they can look a blizzard in the face without blinking an eye; and this is very useful in a country where the winter is seven or eight months long. In fact, but for the camel, the Kirghiz would be helpless in the winter; horses must be fed and they have no oats; cattle are quite useless, and the camel saves the situation; he yells horribly and spits frequently while the shafts are being fastened to his shoulders; but he



A LARGE ZIMOFKA IN EARLY WINTER



KIRGHIZ BLAST-FURNACE MEN



finally moves off and faces the storm, and with a few wisps of hay and a few pints of water he will reach the railway in the end.

The bill of lading is now ready and you call the carrier into your office. The bill calls for the delivery of twelve hundred bars of copper to the agent at Petropavlovsk within thirty days—a distance of nearly five hundred miles. You pay him the stipulated advance, he touches the pen while you sign for him, he folds the document, places it in his wallet, tucks the wallet into one of the many folds of wadded clothing which cover him, puts on his malachai (huge fur bonnet), which entirely covers his head and neck and as much of his face as possible, still leaving the eyes free, looks round, says: “Kosh, Bai,” (goodbye, master), and joins his companions outside. They are waiting for him unconcernedly in the driving snow which cuts into *you* like glass, and slowly the cavalcade moves off. It is growing dark and you are almost afraid to try and find your way in the storm to your house, which is not more than two hundred yards down the road, but these men drift away in the gathering dusk, into the desert where every track is swept away by the storm, straight into the eye of the wind, with their five-hundred-mile walk before them. But they will reach the end somehow—their faces scarred by the cruel wind it is true—they will arrive within the allotted time, and they will deliver their precious

tale of bars to the agent, and the number will be found correct. Of the hundred thousand bars which we despatched we only lost two, and, for these two, the carriers paid in full in cash. This is a loss of two thousandths of one per cent and the loss was immediately made good. If any of our western transportation systems are able to show a record of this kind, it has not been my good fortune to discover it.

Our case was not exceptional; through the whole vast expanse of Siberia, similar caravans are crawling across the interminable spaces. The railway has only recently been built, and even now there is only one. If you have not a large business of your own, you can employ one of the forwarding companies; they will accept your goods anywhere and forward them anywhere; if there is any loss or damage, it will occur when your goods are on the western railway, but not when they are in the hands of these extraordinary carriers.

The quality of fidelity is curiously exhibited in the system of watchmen. If you have any property lying loose anywhere: an unoccupied house or any unprotected property, everything will quickly disappear; but if you put a man at four dollars a month to watch it, everything will be perfectly safe, even from the watchman himself. The result is that everyone has at least one Kirghiz watchman outside his house at night.

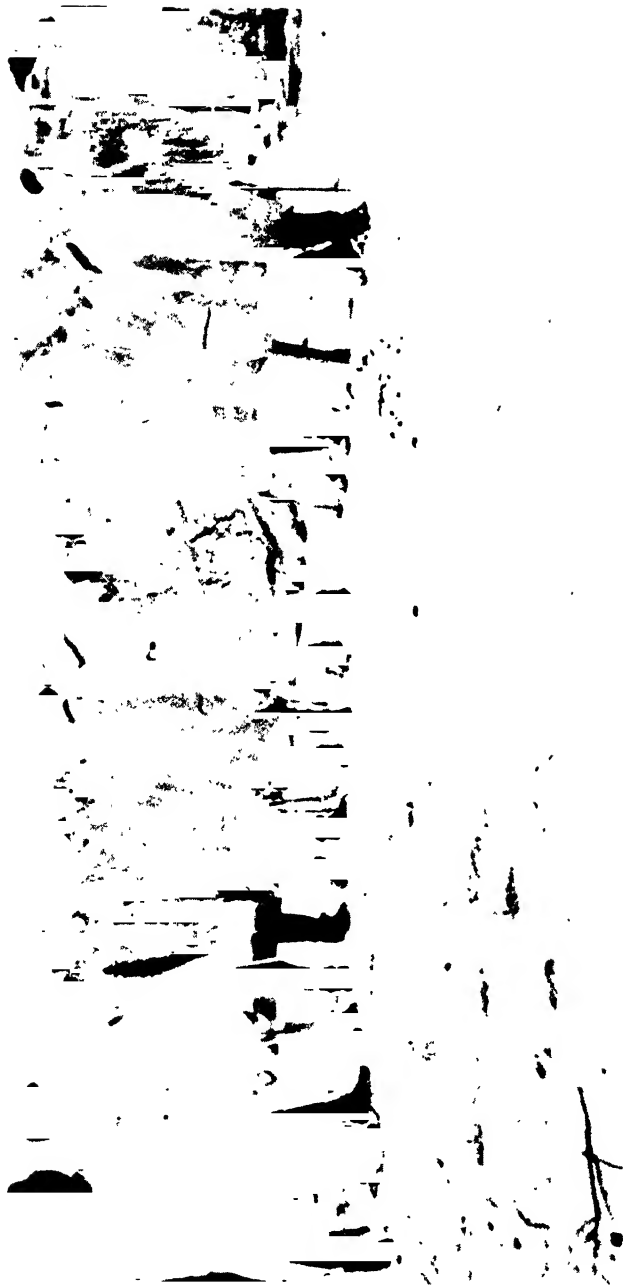
Our old watchman was a decrepit old man, with a pleasant smile. He was provided with a rattle which he rattled vigorously if you appeared at night. "Smeet nieto" (I do not sleep), he used to say, as we passed, the only two words of Russian he knew. Most of us used to give him little presents from time to time, so small as to be almost microscopic; sometimes a stranger might be with us, who did not know our custom, and so passed him by; then the little smiling "Smeet nieto" would murmur rapidly: "There goes a rich man, but he does not give me anything"; but he said it in Kirghiz, and of course our friend did not understand a word of it and the watchman went back to his seat, grunting and mumbling.

The actual pay of the Kirghiz furnace-men was twenty-five cents a day with free quarters, coal and water. They worked in two shifts of twelve hours each, and our furnaces were of such a form that the work was very real. There were no mechanical labour-saving devices; what we succeeded in doing, we accomplished, as our foreman used to say, "by main strength and awkwardness." The Kirghiz supplied the main strength and we supplied the awkwardness. Perhaps they were growing tired of this division of labour; more probably, they were simply demoralized by the unsettling times through which we had lately passed. When the spirit of anarchy is in the air, a certain section of humanity abandons logic



and reason, and becomes a prey to any impulse which may catch its fancy. The impulse at this moment was to pommel somebody and we half a dozen foreigners seemed to be the nearest vulnerable target.

One very cold morning no one appeared at the furnaces. The foremen went to the men's quarters; they refused to move; the strike was on. They then sent up a demand for an increase of their present pay of twenty-five cents per diem to one dollar. This demand was as good as any other to make, and as good as any other to refuse. As strikers, it was impossible to take the Kirghiz seriously, and yet the situation was serious, for the furnaces would soon freeze if not attended to. With two or three others I walked down to their quarters. As soon as we arrived, I saw we had misjudged the situation and had made a mistake. We were instantly surrounded by a yelling mob of impervious, very animated, cotton batting. The Kirghiz dresses himself in the winter with layer after layer of quilted cotton, with heavy felt boots up to his thighs, which are further encased in leather boots; his head and neck and most of his face are enveloped in his malachai. In such armour, nothing short of an axe can make any impression on him. He is further protected by a prodigious smell of tallow and wet wool, which is pleasant to his senses, as is the smell of violets to ours. You feel very helpless when a



### KIRGHIZ CARRIERS

The goods entrusted to these men are as safe as in the vault of a modern bank



quarter of an acre of such odoriferous tallow perfume hems you in. Especially the mob-particles nearest to you seem to be irritated by your presence; they begin to pull and push and hustle you; they have lost all their attributes of human beings; if you were to stumble and fall they would pass over you and not know that you were under their feet; if you were to meet any individual of these wriggling units alone on the Steppe, it would go through fire and water to help you; but, as part of the mob, it shews no more sign of intelligence than the units of the armies of locusts which sometimes invade our western plains. Step by step, we managed to steer the mob toward the works, from which poured a little army of men armed with axes, and the mob fled.

When we were back in our own quarters, the head men of the furnaces came in a deputation to see us.

"Why did you stop work this morning?" I said; "don't you know that the furnaces are growing cold?"

"We want one dollar a day instead of twenty-five cents," they said.

"Well, go back to work first and then come and tell us what you want; if you don't go back very soon there will be no work for you to go back to."

"The Bai forgets that we are on strike; you cannot go back to work if you are striking; but

we want the Bai to give an order that we shall have some credit on our wage-books, so that we can buy some tallow and tea; we don't want much credit, just enough to last us while we are on strike."

"You know you are talking nonsense; go back to your people and tell them to go to work."

"The Bai knows best, but our people will be very disappointed when they hear the Bai will neither raise our pay nor give us credit at the store."

They left; but it was not very long before they appeared again.

"Bai," they said, "perhaps we asked for too much when we asked for one dollar a day. We will be satisfied with fifty cents a day."

"You are now receiving double the wages you used to get before we came to the works, and we cannot pay any more than we are paying; besides, I do not want to talk to you until you have gone back to work."

They came back again later.

"Bai," they said, "it is very unfortunate and very awkward that during a strike we can get nothing to eat."

"It is your own fault," I said. "Go back to work and you will again receive credits on your books."

"But the coal is so bad which the coal-carriers leave for us; there is very little of it, and it is



READY TO HAUL COPPER TO MARKET  
With a few wisps of hay they will reach the railway in the end





full of slate; we are cold and we cannot cook our fat."

Our ears were deaf to this appeal also, and the next morning they appeared again in a melancholy mood.

"Bai," they said, "you see the furnaces are working very badly; Izkak cannot even keep his settler clean of slag. Why don't you give us what we want?"

"I have told you again and again that I will give you nothing until you all go back to work."

"At least the Bai will promise to put in a floor in our quarters, so that we do not have to lie on the cold ground."

"I will do nothing until you have all gone back to work."

They were quite dejected when they left and quickly returned.

"At least the Bai," they said, "will grant us this request; our copper kettle is quite worn out; will the Bai give us an order for a new kettle?"

It is impossible to maintain a consistent and stern attitude toward such helpless and amiable people. The hustling, pushing mob is forgotten, the frozen furnaces are forgotten, the long-planned strike has come down to a request for a copper kettle.

The order was signed and they quickly went and bought their kettle and came and showed it to me in triumph.



"You have won your strike, have you not?" I said.

"Yes, Bai, we are now going back to work."

"Well, next time you all want a day off, tell me beforehand and you will not have to go through the trouble of a strike to get it."

"Tairjilgassin, Djaksi Bai, Kosh."

(Thank you, thank you; the master is very good, goodbye.)

## THE PAVLODAR CLUB.

WE, Rucker and I and two assistants, had come to Omsk on sundry matters of business, but especially, to consult with the arbiter of our destinies, the Okroojnyi Injenier: that is the Government mining engineer, who had jurisdiction of the district in which our mines were operating.

He was a pleasant enough man, but nervous and irritable, being overweighted with the load of responsibility, which he thought was balanced on his shoulders. In a sense, it was a load which would and should have crushed any fifty men; but, if his sense of humour had been more acute (and it is a noteworthy fact that Russians are deficient in that sense), he would have carried his load more lightly; for he would have observed that he immediately passed forward ninety-nine per cent of it, to the shoulders of the head mining officer of the division, who lived in Tomsk; and this urbane gentleman, receiving similar loads of responsibility from the shoulders of other district engineers, when he observed that the documents had accumulated to such an extent, that his cellars were full to overflowing, engaged a freight car and

shipped ninety-nine and a half per cent of them to the Ministry of Imperial Domains in Petersburg, where there are especially prepared foundations, capable of sustaining the weight of similar consignments for centuries, without distracting the attention of the high officials above ground.

Now there are two ways of carrying on the practical business of organized society; one is, to assume that each individual is, in the nature of things, better suited than anybody else to take care of himself; and the other is, to assume that there is, in the State, somewhere far away in the distance, some personage, be he emperor or king or president, who is better able to take care of the individual than the individual himself.

In Russia, it was long ago decided by Ivan the Terrible or by Peter the Great or by some other personage of forceful character, that the individual knows nothing at all of the way in which his business should be conducted. It was then settled (without trial by jury) that, not only the weak and poor, but also the rich and strong must be surrounded by fatherly care and protection. Without entering upon any consideration of the advantages or disadvantages of the system, and without any profound training or highly developed powers of observation, it is easy to see that the parental plan of devolved responsibility involves the consumption of a vast tonnage of paper and ink and the creation of an army of officials, which

hovers over society like a cloud of mosquitoes. It tends also to create, in the minds of technically trained men, a high appreciation of the value of carefully tabulated records, regardless of whether the tables record any facts of practical interest or not.

We were at one time engaged in examining a large number of mining prospects, scattered over a wide territory. We divided the prospects into districts, and to each district we assigned a duly certificated mining engineer, each properly equipped with tools and workmen to carry out the explorations. They left in the spring and were to return at the close of summer. Their instructions were to examine the prospects, do such work as they might think desirable, note the result and make a sketch of the location. "Your work is very important," I said, "for on the results which you report will depend our selection of the prospects which are to be developed next year."

When the snow began to fall, they all came in, and my conversation with Peter Konstantinovich, graduate of Petersburg, is typical of my conversation with them all.

"Peter Konstantinovich," I said, "I am glad to see you back. Is your health good?"

"My health is excellent, thank you, Nelson Alfredovich."

"Did you examine all the prospects in your district?" I asked.

"I examined them all."

"Did you find any of them interesting?" I asked.

"I worked very hard at my map; I have brought it with me; it shows the location of all the prospects."

"That is very nice. I am very glad. I will look at the map later. But for the present tell me your opinion of the prospects; do you think any of them appear promising? Which is, in your opinion, the best?"

"How can I tell? I was busy making my map. I think you will be pleased with the map," said Peter.

"But, Peter Konstantinovitch, the mines are what we want to know about; the map is useless to us unless the mines are worth something."

"Well, I cannot tell you anything about the mines, because I was too busy preparing my map to notice them. Is it not unreasonable of you to ask me questions about the mines, when you see the fine map which I have made?"

That was all the information I could ever obtain from him and the beautiful map is the only return we ever received from the labour of him and his fellow workers.

But to return to our district engineer; he was fully impressed with the idea that he was carrying the whole district on his shoulders and much of the rest of the world besides. He worked pain-

fully at his desk all day, and drank coffee all night, to keep himself awake, while he continued to work at his hopeless task. Poor man! He felt that we all depended upon him, and that he, of all men, must not give way. How horrified would he have been if he had thought it possible that any man could suggest any comparison between him and a mosquito. Pathetic, too, it was to hear him wonder if his health would permit him to remain at work just two years more, so that his "Tchin" would be raised to that of a "General." Mysterious Tchin! Like an idol it sits in the house of every Tchinovnik and shares with the ikon the prayers and devotion of him and of his family.

He conscientiously plodded through the papers in our case, examined the plans of each workman's house, approved the printed agreements which were printed in Russian and Arabic on the first pages of our workmen's time-books, and finally, all details finished, we wished him goodbye.

The sun was setting, the ground was covered with fresh snow, the thermometer was registering about twenty-five degrees below zero; the wind was strong, whirling the snow in cutting eddies round your ears. We packed ourselves into our sleighs and started in the dusk for Pavlodar, a town three hundred and ninety-eight versts (two hundred and sixty-five miles) higher up the Irtysh River. We had nothing but little open sleighs,

mere baskets set on runners, but our peemies (felt boots) were nearly an inch thick and our shubas (large fur overcoats) were huge, and we determined to push on.

The road follows the right bank of the river Irtysh, now of course frozen solid, but in summer a large navigable stream. It runs through a rich agricultural country, settled, and quite thickly settled, for many years. The land is productive and easily worked. Every few miles is a village, with a look dreary and forlorn beyond words. Happy are you if you pass through it in winter when the snow throws a merciful blanket over its nakedness. Whether it is in Russia or in Siberia, the village of the Krestyanin (peasant) is a hopeless, dreary institution. The utmost it seems able to do is to keep its inmates alive; it gives them none of the comforts or amenities or pleasures of life, and it offers them no hope of change or improvement. And yet it is the Krestyanin who is carrying the vast burden of the Empire on his shoulders. He it is who should be drinking coffee to keep himself awake during the night, while he solves the problem of the huge nation which he carries in his arms. It is not you, my friend the District Engineer, nursing your Tchin, piling up your interminable reports and tables which never see the light of day, who are carrying this burden; not you, but this patient, toiling, suffering creature; to whom all things are denied,

except the right to follow the plough and sow the wheat, till he drops in the furrow which he has made, forgotten by you and me and all of us. The man without hope! He lives in a stratum separated from the rest of humanity by a film of law and custom which is impermeable and impenetrable, so that those, who would see, are prevented, and those, who would rather not do so, need not strain their eyes to look. Fortunately for Russia, the Krestyanin stratum is broad and solid. Godfearing, kindly, enduring, he will bravely bear his load until the world will see his worth. He is easily the most interesting thing, most full of possibilities, before the eyes of the world today.

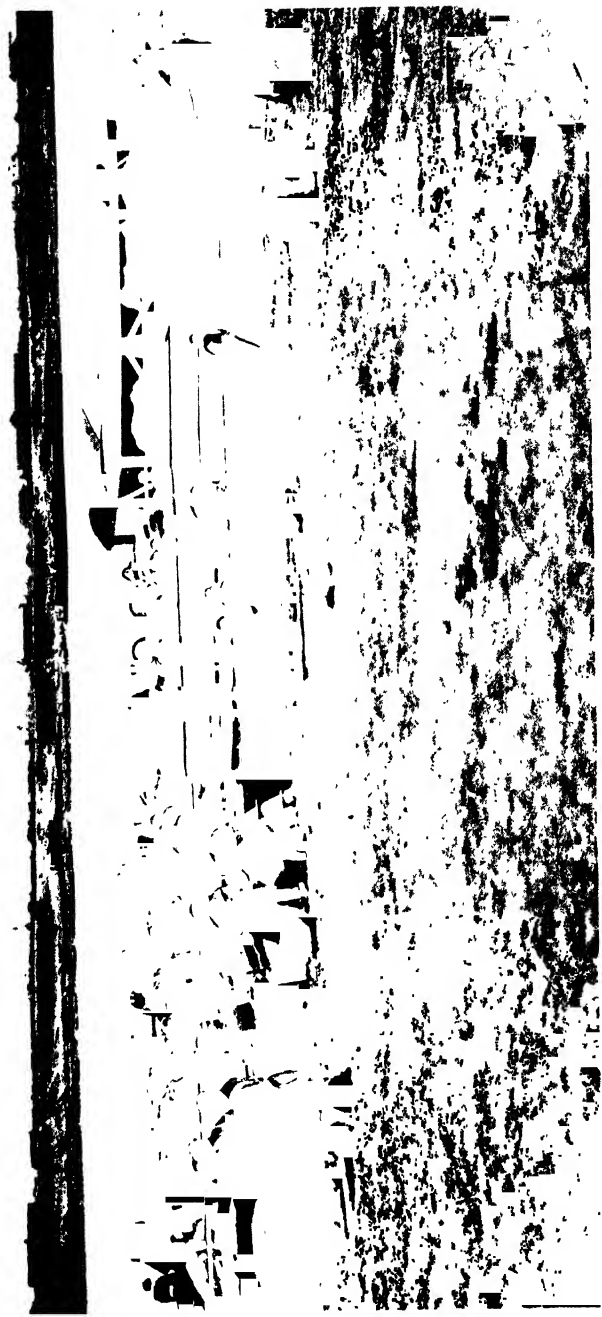
At any rate, there is no danger that he will be rendered soft or effete by any Capuan luxury of surroundings. During the short summer, he toils in the fields from dawn till dark and, during the winter, he has nothing to do except things which had better be left undone. The only spark which illumines his life is the church, which sheds its light upon the village, from the hill on which it is always built.

Our road lay through a succession of these villages, only distinguishable, one from the other, by the lay of the ground around them. The houses are small, built of logs, with roofs of thatch whose edges are left untrimmed, which dwarf the houses and give a drab-coloured, untidy appearance to the whole village. The interior is simple enough;



a large brick stove which keeps the house effectively warm, a table, a bench or two, a little crockery and some earthen jars for cooking purposes. There are very few iron pots or pans; nearly everything is cooked in earthenware in the oven and the water is boiled in the universal samovar. The demands on the cook are not very great; their diet is principally whole-wheat bread, kasha or porridge of buckwheat, sweet milk, tea, vegetable soups such as bortsch (made of beets) and schtchi (made of sour cabbage) and sometimes fish. The housewives are clever at preserving for winter use the summer vegetables, such as pickled cucumbers, sour cabbage, dried mushrooms. A delicious drink called kvas is made by a long process of digesting burnt bread in water. The process is a long one, but is easy where the oven is kept hot, night and day, in that greatest of all blessings, the stove which never fails. Considering that the houses are of the most inflammable material, fires are very rare; an immunity derived from the form of the brick stoves, which practically rob the smoke of all heat, before allowing it to escape from the chimney.

At some of the villages we stopped and drank hot tea while the horses were being changed, but the night was bitterly cold, and, driving hour after hour, the cold grips you in spite of your warm clothes. After a long night of such driving, you are thoroughly chilled and your hands and feet



FERRY ACROSS THE RIVER IRISH AT PAVLODAR



become instruments of torture. The only variation to the monotony is your arrival at, or departure from, a village. The driver sights the windmills from afar and gathers up his reins and lashes the horses to a wild gallop. The driver of the other sleigh does the same and there is a mad race for the rest-house. The bells jangle, the drivers yell and you swerve into the stable-yard as if every second were worth millions, and you were the most important man on earth. When the horses are changed, you pack yourselves once again into the basket, the whips pop, bells jangle and the same mad race begins again; when the village is out of sight, you settle down again to the cold, and the dull grind, till you hear the next whooping and yelling and you know you are near another village.

On such a trip, it was always my inclination to push on and endure the cold and hunger and be done with it. It was impossible to reconcile Rucker to this plan, but we kept him in line, by holding out to him the joy of a speedy arrival at Pavlodar, and the delights of a good dinner at the new club. We had all been to Pavlodar before and we knew that, of hotels, such as we call hotels, there were none. But we had also heard from our agent Koshleff, the principal merchant of the town, that there had lately been organized a club with a fine restaurant, and a marvel of a cook and good wines. So we entertained Rucker

with imaginary menus of every possible delicacy, washed down with vodka and port wine; and this potent virus of anticipation acquired such an influence over him, that he forgot his present troubles, in the thoughts of the joys to come. At the last station before Pavlodar, he too was impatient to be off. "Why waste our time here," he said, "when we shall be in a warm room, sitting at a clean table in the club, waiting for our roast partridges? And the vodka with the zakooska! What joy there is in a hot dinner, after a forty-eight-hour fast, in an open sleigh."

We dashed into the town at full speed and, after some enquiring, found the club, a neat building, full of new furniture. The dining-room was in the rear, overlooking the garden, which looked dreary enough in its cloak of ice and snow. We told the porter who opened the door for us, to summon the head waiter or steward, as we wanted to order dinner.

"Yes, your Honour," said he, "I will fetch him at once." And the porter began to put on his overshoes and fur coat.

"You need not put those things on," I said, "we don't want the gardener; we want the steward or head waiter."

"Yes, your Honour, I understand; I will fetch him at once; he lives only two blocks from here, he will not be long."

This seemed rather unbusiness-like, but the por-

ter ran off and we sat down in a huge empty room, with small bentwood, cane-bottom chairs around the walls.

"They say," said Rucker, in a half-dream, "that a partridge should be cooked with dressing; let us have plenty of dressing."

"I hope they have some sterlitz," I murmured, "they say that the sterlitz from the Irtysh is as good as that from the Volga."

In due course the steward appeared:

"What are your orders?" he asked.

"We want to order a dinner; a dinner of four covers; we have come from Omsk in an open sleigh, and we are as hungry as wolves. We understand that your cook is a good cook."

"Oh! he is a wonder! a marvel of a cook! What will you wish to order for dinner?"

"Well—first we want some good zakooska, something to lead us up gradually to the good things to follow."

"Quite so. Would you like some sardines, some smoked salmon, some radishes, some caviar?"

"Yes, yes," we cried, "and the vodka with the white seal."

"Of course, of course," said he, "then would you like some bortsch, with smyetana and piroshkas?"

After we had explained to Rucker that bortsch was the soup he was so fond of and that it was always served with whipped sour cream and small

pasties, filled with cheese or egg or sausage meat, he became very enthusiastic.

"Yes, yes," he cried, "and after that, roast goose with sour cabbage; and then, some partridges with plenty of dressing."

"And after that," said the steward, catching the enthusiasm, "will your Honour have a little wine jelly?"

"Yes, if your cook makes it well."

"Oh, our cook is a marvel!"

"Well," I said, "that seems all that is necessary to say, except to mention the time. It is now twelve o'clock; we will return at three, that will allow plenty of time to thoroughly prepare everything: at three o'clock, then."

"Yes, your Honour, you mean at three o'clock tomorrow."

"Tomorrow," I gasped, "of course we mean tomorrow week; travellers who come in open sleighs from Omsk, naturally want to wait a week or so, before they eat anything."

But irony is not a strong point amongst Russians.

"I do not understand your Honour," said the steward, "the dinner will be ready punctually tomorrow at three; our cook is a marvel."

"Oh, hang your cook! Cannot you understand that we want dinner now — at once — as soon as we can possibly have it? We are hungry."

"But, your Honour," pleaded the steward, "do



THE COSSACK VILLAGE OF BAYAN AOOL





you not see how unreasonable you are? The cook lives on his farm three miles from here. You know that to make good bortsch, at least twelve hours are necessary. I must go and buy the goose and dress it and the partridges. The pastry must be made. I must find the plates and dishes, which were lent last week to the Zaizoffs when their daughter was married. You see how impossible it is to talk of preparing a dinner in three hours. At the present moment there is nothing in the house, not even a loaf of bread. But tomorrow, at three, all will be ready; and our cook is a wonder, a marvel."

"Yes, steward. I see now how utterly unreasonable we were," I groaned. "I suppose we were overcome by the cold, or by our excitement. We fear we cannot hope to taste the handiwork of your cook, who is a marvel. Tonight we shall be on the road to Bayan Aool. May the memory of your description of the good things we should find tomorrow, sustain us through the night. Farewell."

Rucker's language at this point cannot be recorded. I doubt if Rucker will ever thoroughly enjoy foreign travel.

## THE POMINKA.

ON the tenth of November, 1907, we struggled in the face of a furious bouran (blizzard) across the open space which separated our house from the office. The air was full of icy particles, which cut your face, and made you wonder whether you would succeed in reaching your goal or not. When we reached the office, Rucker did not allow us time to take off our coats, but burst out with the question:

"Have you heard that Sultan Hacén Akaev is dead?"

"No! When did he die?"

"Yesterday, in his winter quarters on the Topor, about forty miles from here."

"How did you hear?"

"By Kirghiz telegraph."

The dissemination of news by natives, who possess no mechanical appliances, is a phenomenon noted by all travellers in remote regions. Whether in Africa, where travel is on foot, or in Asia, where it is on horseback, the news of every event is passed from mouth to mouth and from village to village, with a rapidity and certainty, which is

little short of marvellous. Within twenty-four hours of the Sultan's death, it is probable that every living person within a circle of two hundred miles had heard of it.

The death of so rich a man as Sultan Hacen Akaev was an event of considerable importance in Kirghiz life. In addition to the important question of the distribution of his vast flocks and herds, and the readjustment of the social organization of his Aool or village, there was the pominka that would follow his death.

As in Ireland a funeral is made the occasion of elaborate ceremonies and feasting, so, in Kirghiz land, the custom is that a notable man, before he dies, makes all necessary dispositions for a great festival, to be held six months or a year after his death, to which all his friends and the whole countryside shall be invited. In this way, not only does the dying man provide in a worthy manner for the dignity and honour of his family, but he also carries with him, beyond the grave, the tradition and law of Kirghiz hospitality. It is, indeed, a wonderful law; chiefly wonderful, because it is universally obeyed. To the guest within the Aool, nothing can be denied, no matter what the previous relations between guest and host may have been. The duty of hospitality prevails over all other sentiments. Most laws and customs are sometimes broken, but this law is never violated, not even in death.

As is natural, the greater the wealth of the deceased, the greater is the extent of the festivities. The pominka of Sultan Hacen Akaev would be, no doubt, on an unusually large scale.

The week commencing May the first was the time set for the festival; and for months beforehand but little else was talked of amongst the Kirghiz. We, also, were planning to attend in state, and Rucker was especially interested in the preparations; for his particular work threw him into closer relations, than the rest of us, with the Kirghiz. He had quite a large vocabulary of their language at the tip of his tongue, and, when he visited them, could dispense fairly well with the services of an interpreter.

He used frequently to visit his particular friend Ospan, the Volostnoi Oopravitel of the Noura district, who was continually begging him to join the Aool and become one of them. "Why do you work so hard?" Ospan would say. "Buy some fat-tail sheep and come and live with us; my men will look after your animals for you; you will not have to do anything; you will have all the koomiss you want, and plenty of mutton tallow; you will grow fat; what more can a man want?" How he resisted such seductive appeals, I do not know.

Our preparations were on an extensive scale, for, in the East, appearances count for a great deal. We sent forward large new yurtas, our best rugs, silk hangings and cushions, and groomed

OSPAN WITH HIS CHILDREN.





our horses to the last point. Also we took a small private store of provisions; for, at times, the menu of the East becomes unendurable to the palate of the West.

On the day appointed, we started on horseback, with a cavalcade of friends, servants and Russo-Kirghiz interpreters. We were decked out in everything Kirghiz we could muster; our horses were weighted down with heavy silver-mounted bridles of native workmanship; those of us who could endure them, suffered tortures on Kirghiz saddles. Mine was a Cossack affair, something like a Texas saddle, but with a thick leather cushion strapped across the seat. It is strange how many ways there are of accomplishing the same thing and how wedded each of us is to his own. I considered these Cossack saddles the most awkward things in the world, whereas the Cossacks regarded my beautiful Whippy with the utmost contempt.

Rucker was in great glory. On his feet were huge felt linings encased in Kirghiz-made leather boots with silver mountings. On his legs were sheepskin trousers, untanned, having the wool inside, and these were tucked into his boots. Above, he wore a khalat, a loose wadded coat of gorgeous silk, with a silver-mounted belt around his waist, from which hung several pouches of fancy leather, heavily silver-mounted. On his head was a pink silk malachai, lined with the fur



of the red fox. We were very proud of him, and we hoisted him into the saddle, as his costume deprived him of the natural power of movement.

"Kusain," he shouted, "fasten my koomiss skins on to my saddle."

Kusain hung two skins of koomiss, one on each side of the saddle, each holding about two gallons; and with this his outfit was complete.

We were a gay party and galloped over the Steppes enjoying the bright air of Spring. We naturally grouped ourselves round Rucker and we were making merry over the bags of koomiss which were bounding at his side; when, suddenly, there was a loud explosion, and Rucker, and all of us, were covered with a shower of the powerfully smelling fluid. Koomiss ferments with great violence, and the heat of the sun had distended the skin bottles to the danger-point. Probably Rucker's horse was jostled by his neighbour's and the blow was sufficient to start the charge. Everyone within fifty feet received his share, but Rucker himself was a sad sight. The evil stuff dripped over his pink malachai and his crimson and green khalat. Stains of various hues spread in channels all over him. Worse than all was the peculiarly pungent perfume which he exhaled. For days he was a burden to himself and to us, but, to his particular Kirghiz friends, he was a source of great delight.

Several miles from the Aool, and long before

we could see it, we saw a large party of gaily-dressed riders, dashing toward us; they had ridden out to meet us and escort us in honour to our tent.

“Salaam Allaikum! Aman! Aman!”

It all seemed very gay and very simple and natural. They turned and rode with us to the encampment.

When we arrived at the Aool, it was the scene of the most animated life conceivable. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, had come in to enjoy the sport, for such a pominka might never occur again, during their lifetime. A hundred piebald two-year-old horses, a number hitherto unheard of, had been allotted for slaughter to feed the multitude; and as for the sheep, no one thought of counting them. All day and night the feasting went on; from tent to tent, great steaming platters of boiled meat and skins of koomiss were carried. Everyone ate and drank for three days to his utmost capacity.

When our arrival was known, the head men of the Aool called at our tent to welcome us. Our samovar was set on the usual round table, about six inches high, and, round it, we all squatted on rugs on the ground. The tea was dispensed by our servant. It is served in small cups and saucers, boiling hot, of course. As soon as the Kirghiz receives his cup, he immediately pours half of it into his saucer, nibbles off a small piece

of sugar which he holds between his teeth, and sups the tea with an appreciative gurgle. As he drinks he obtains the sensation of sweetness, with an extraordinarily small consumption of sugar. Immediately his cup is empty, the attendant replenishes it without asking any question. When he has had enough, he turns his cup, bottom side up, on his saucer.

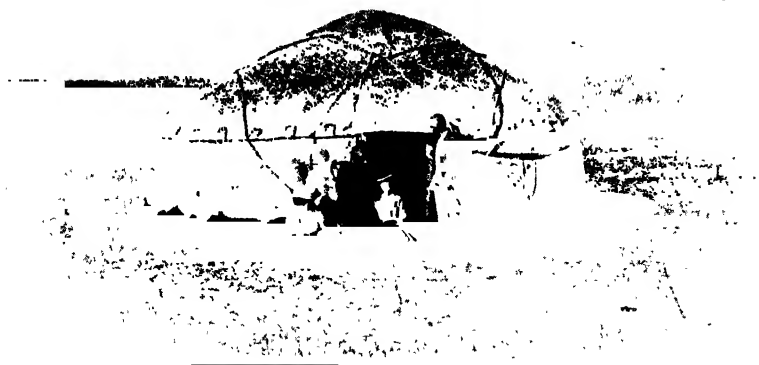
After tea, the bard began to sing, and the usual compliments were exchanged.

"The Oolkum Bai is a great lord of mighty wealth," said the head man, "we know he has much money, for he spends thousands of roubles every day. He places bread in the mouths of many Kirghiz, and we are grateful to him. The name of Peel" (the nearest approach they could ever make to my name) "will endure like a rock in our memories forever. But the Bai is as thin as the poorest Kirghiz on the Steppes. If the Bai will look round, he will see that all rich men are fat. We cannot understand why the Bai is not also fat."

This was the moment for which I had been preparing with some care. It was our custom to converse with the Kirghiz through a Russo-Kirghiz interpreter. We spoke in Russian and the interpreter was supposed to reproduce our words in Kirghiz. The interpreter was usually a Kirghiz of no especial education or attainments. In my interviews with the native head men, I



A YURTA IN THE MAKING



A FINISHED YURTA



had always felt at a disadvantage because, when I wanted to indulge in a discourse on a high plane of thought, I must first put it into Russian and then trust to the mercy of the Russo-Kirghiz interpreter. To my great annoyance, my most elevated and elevating periods were reproduced with a few guttural gurgles and tongue rattles, and of course the whole effect was lost. Before the pominka, I had especially coached my own interpreter Noorman. "You must try hard to reproduce my words; it is I who am talking, not you; you babble all day for your own pleasure, this time I want you to use my phrases exactly; it is perhaps a virtue to be brief; but I want to set up my own standard for myself; and, when I proclaim a full yard of magnificent sentiment, I do not want you to cut it down to half an inch."

This, then, was the crucial moment when Noorman's training was to be put to the test. I glanced at him with a severe look, and, assuming my most impressive manner, I turned to the head man and replied as follows:

"In our own country, we do not consider wealth merely as a means to satisfy our own desires, but rather as a responsibility for the development of the happiness of those around us."

We all looked toward Noorman; there was a gurgle in his throat, a slight movement of his lips, then silence. He had finished. It was very depressing.

The chief broke the awkward pause and resumed on the same line of thought. "We know the Bai is rich, but we do not understand why the Bai works so hard. Why does he not sit down and enjoy his wealth?"

This was a splendid opening and I replied:

"The wise men of our country consider that wealth is a measure of success rather than an object and an aim in itself. Wealth does not produce happiness. Only the mind conscious of work well done can be considered truly happy."

"B-r-r-r; G-g-g-g; B-r, G-g," mumbled Noorman and closed his mouth with a click.

All my training and coaching had been in vain; it was useless to pursue such lines of thought. I think the head man understood it also, for he changed the subject abruptly and said:

"Where do you live?"

"In New York," I replied.

"I don't know where that is," he said, "I have heard of Akmolinsk and Pavlodar, but I have not heard of New York. If you wish to go to New York, in which direction should you travel?"

I confess to a feeling of malice, for I walked to the door of the tent, and, facing North, I stretched out one arm to the East and the other to the West. I waved first one arm, then the other. "You can go to my country either by travelling in this direction or in that."

"Why do you say that you can reach one place



KIRGHIZ WOMEN WRESTLING



GATHERING FOR THE START OF THE RACE





by travelling in two directions which are directly contrary to each other?"

"The earth on which we stand is round like the apples which you see on the table," I replied. "You arrive on the opposite side of the ball, whether you travel this way or that."

"Why do you say that the earth is round," the chief asked, "when we see that it is flat?" And he waved his arm over the plain which certainly seemed to support his idea.

Why, indeed, had I said it? It is much safer to stick to tallow and koomiss and horses. I gave the conversation a hard wrench, and, with a great effort of memory, using their own language, I said:

"Ak Burat bar?" (have you any thoroughbred horses). The effect was magical; everyone forgot about apples and round worlds and the duties of wealth; they all began to chatter at once; harmony and peace were restored.

For three days the pominka lasted, a continuous feast, day and night, with sports thrown in. Wrestling is very popular, even the women engage in hard-fought bouts; but especially popular are the sports and games with which horses are concerned. The sheepskin contest always draws a large crowd. The skin of a freshly slaughtered sheep is seized by a mounted rider who gallops off; hundreds dash after him and try to wrest it from him; the man who succeeds dashes off

with it himself and so it changes hands. It is a rough sport and so is the wrestling on horseback; but everyone is so good-natured and good-humoured, that it is rare that anyone is hurt.

One form of sport (?) they have which is not inspiring; it is, in fact, disgusting. Every Aool of consequence has its eating champion, and, on festal occasions, the champions of different Aools are pitted against each other. The two champions sit down facing one another, and platter after platter of boiled meat (always without salt) is put in front of each man, who crams the meat into his mouth with his hands and gulps it down like a wolf. Bowl after bowl of koomiss, and samovar after samovar of tea disappear in like manner. The quantity which these gastronomical giants are able to consume is astonishing. An ordinary accomplishment for one hero at a sitting is:

One entire sheep.

Eight gallons of koomiss.

Two gallons of tea.

Wonderful, but horrible.

The pominka usually closes with the most popular event of all, the horse-race. It is a cross-country race and starts from a point about twelve or fifteen miles away. Tiny little boys are put up as jockeys, their little legs too small to grip the saddle. The crowd gathers near the finish



## TWO KIRGHIZ

They are engaged in the most important business of their lives



and waits patiently for an hour or two. Little specks appear on the horizon, and a number of horsemen gather to meet them. As they come nearer, the partisans of each horse close in round it, and gallop by its side, urging it forward with whip and shouts. They grow more and more excited as they draw near the goal; one rider whips out a rope and, fastening one end to the saddle of the racing horse, ties the other to his own and drags him along. Another does the same on the other side, another catches the bridle, and so on, till there may be a dozen fresh horses dragging the tired race-horse along with terrific yells and shouts. It is a scene of the greatest possible animation; the crowd is immense, all well mounted, racing hither and thither. There is no defined finish, no judge, but there never seems to be any difficulty in deciding which horse is the winner. The honour is much prized both for the horse and the rider. It is indeed wonderful to see how the little fellows of six and eight years of age can endure such a ride. The prize may be of money, of cloth or anything else. But, whatever it is, it is immediately distributed by the winner amongst his friends. He likes the honour of winning, but the prize itself has no attractions for him. I have never observed this habit on our Western race-courses. The odd thing is that it is all done so naturally, so good-humouredly, without any definition of rules, or without intervention of stewards

or judges or police; they play the game like real sportsmen.

We left in the dust of the finish, but we were careful to see that Rucker had no koomiss bags concealed about his person.

## THE TURQUOISE LAKE.

SHROUDED in mystery by the Hungry Steppe that lay between the smelting-works and its shores, tempting us with rumours of its beauty and varied animal life, Balkhash, the second largest lake in Asia, had been the goal of all our winter dreams. So, when our turbulent rivers had found their banks again, after the spring floods, and the Steppes had put on their flowery mantle once more, we started our forerunners out across the lonely waste: two trusty Kirghiz servants, old Tundus Bek and Zakir Bek the driver, with two wagons, one containing a boat and the other a felt tent with its wooden frame neatly folded and packed.

One morning in early May the wooden axles of the wagons set up their usual vociferous complaint and the two shaggy ponies threw their weight into the collars for the two-hundred-mile pull to the lake. The two crawling specks dipped over the horizon and we at once set about our own preparations for a month's exile from civilization.

The Mine of the Assumption was man's last outpost on the Steppes; beyond that lay sage-



brush barrens, unroamed over even by the Kirghiz; then the great lake; then the fastnesses of the mountain chains bordering on the Gobi desert. A slender track, invisible almost as a cobweb, connected us with Vernii, a rich city on the Semipalatinsk-Tashkend post-road, with fabled gardens of flowers and luscious fruits, whose magic we only knew through the wagon-loads of ooriok (dried plums) and cherries and unbelievably large pink apples, which came to us across the desert along the cobweb track. Sarts from Turkestan, Tibetans with their yaks bound for the fair at Kooyandy, Kirghiz who wintered their flocks in the South: these were the only travellers on this road.

We gave our wagons two weeks' start and then, on May 15th, our two plunging piebald troikas and our troika of racing chestnuts galloped off through the works, amidst a cloud of horsemen, dragging our bounding carriages behind them.

"Aidà, my children!" shouted Adam the leading driver, giving his famous chestnuts the rein. Plunging in their collars, they swerved round the hill on which the church stood. Ahead, lay a deep gully spanned by a narrow bridge. The second troika, driven by Noorman, was close behind. The six eager horses were quite out of hand, racing for the bridge; a collision was inevitable.

"The young ladies have fallen out!" cried Adam to his master as the chestnut hoofs thundered on the bridge. Noorman had pulled his racing pie-

balds up the hill; two wheels of the carriage spun in the air and it fell on its side with a crash, hurling all its contents, three travellers, two balalaikas, books, sketching materials, bags of flour, rugs and pillows, pellmell down the hill. Noorman was adroit enough to retain his hold of the reins, and, encumbered with the dragging carriage, the horses were pulled to a standstill on the brink of the gully.

"Ai, Ai, Ai, the horses are very fresh after their winter's rest!" murmured Adam. "It is a good thing the korobok upset, or they would certainly have plunged into the river." A few minutes spent in collecting the scattered baggage, and a little sticking-plaster, were all that were needed to start us on our way again.

We camped for noon on the river Sara Soo, a tributary of the Syr Daria (the ancient Oxus) and, that evening, our troikas trotted into the village at the Mine of the Assumption, a good deal subdued after their first stage of seventy miles.

At dawn next day, our friends at the mine saw our five travellers, five Kirghiz servants, three troikas, five saddle-horses, and three led horses file away southward across the rolling plain, and dip downward over the last hills into the blue mystery of the Hungry Steppe. That night we camped in a lush green valley, at the foot of Kisil Tav, or Red Mountain, a bold escarpment, the sentinel which guards the desert. A spring

of cold water gushed out at the roadside, the last sweet water which we were to taste until we reached the lake. That night wolves were howling on the hillside above us, and our horses, clanking through the grass in their chain hobbles, neighed uneasily. The air was chill, with warm gusts from the desert. We broke camp next morning by the light of the stars and one candle burning steadily in the still morning air, and the patient ponies were soon jogging along once more. We welcomed the sun with shouts as it rose out of the gray barrens, for we were very cold.

Noon found us "out of sight of land." The last hills had faded away, not even a Karagand bush broke the level line of the horizon. The sun beat fiercely down on a parched flat of gray clay, withering the sagebrush upon it, scarring it with cracks and wrinkles. The air quivered with the heat. The wet flanks of the horses heaved, for they were fat and soft with Spring grass. Our Kirghiz drew their wadded coats more closely about them and pulled their malachais about their ears to keep out the heat. We discarded coats and hats and panted for the next well of brackish water, which we hoped to reach by evening.

The three troikas filed along the road at a slow jog, their twin-yoke bells chiming out a monotonous sequence of notes, which seemed a part of the quivering air and the scent of the sagebrush.

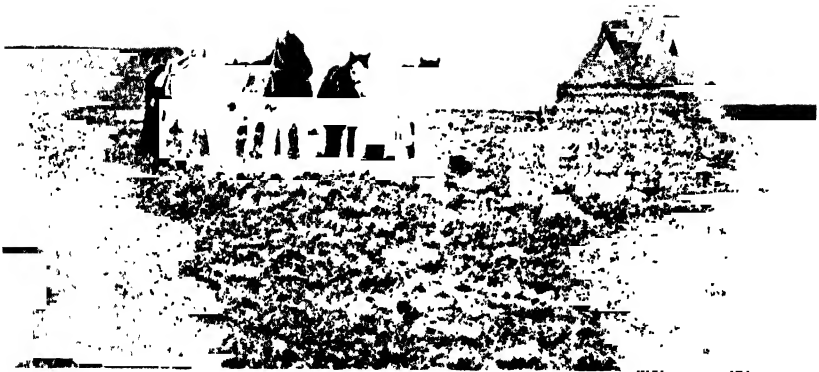
Those of us who were on horseback roamed farther afield, in search of the solitary moghilas of the Kirghiz, who have died on their slow migrations along this road. They were all we could hope to find to break the universal monotony. Once or twice we were beckoned aside by shimmering lakes and hills, but we soon learned that these were either vast fields of alkali, or else mirages produced by the heat and distance. The only signs of life were the little bounding "kusayaks" or jerboas, tiny rodents like kangaroos, with long, flickering white tails, and an occasional "saiga" or antelope, fleeing before us. Even these we gradually left behind.

On the third morning, we filled our water-bottles, for we knew that we should reach no well that night. We travelled until long after dark and made only a short halt. A hot gale was blowing and our horses were suffering terribly from hunger and thirst. Next morning saw our dusty little caravan crawl away on the longest stage of the journey. At noon we reached a brackish well, where the horses quenched their thirst, but we preferred the warm contents of our water-bottles. We were surprised at the absence of travel on the Vernii-Akmolinsk trail; but our men explained that the Kirghiz had already come North, that the season was too far advanced, water too scarce and the scant grass too withered, for herds and flocks to cross the desert. Sixty

miles of baked clay we covered that day, and a very long day it seemed.

But the last rays of the setting sun shone for us, that evening, on the dome of a large moghila, Sarum Sakti, the Yellow Reeds. The very name implied water and the end of the desert. A rich Kirghiz had died here and his friends had raised this tomb of mud and water to his memory, moulding it out of yellow clay, building it among the golden reeds at the edge of a little pond. Beyond it, lay a range of low, red hills, and, beyond them, the lake.

The horses were pitiful, bony wrecks by now, exhausted by the heat and nearly two hundred miles of slow jogging and lack of food and water. One of them was completely worn out, and we were forced to leave him behind, sending a wagon for him after we had reached the lake. We would gladly have pushed on early next morning but took pity on our horses. Our shadows were reaching far ahead of us when we approached the last hills dividing us from the lake. Not a tree, not a bush, not a blade of grass was in sight; the crimson sandstone hills glowed blood-red in the light of the setting sun. A flag and two little figures were silhouetted against the sky on the highest summit. At sight of us, the two figures bundled down as fast as their clumsy high boots and voluminous clothing would allow. No wonder Tundus Bek and Zakir Bek were glad to see us!



LARGE MOGHILAS ON THE ARID STEPPES



MOGHILAS NEAR LAKE BALKHASH



They had been prodigal of their provisions at the start, and we had been delayed longer than they expected; their food supply had become exhausted a week ago, and they had been living on wild onions and lake water. Adam, Noorman and Abdrachman whipped their horses into a semblance of a canter; the string of led horses jerked and pulled and, at last, stirred their thin, weary legs a little faster; we ascended a low divide and, behold, a picture even more rich and brilliant than all our winter dreams had painted! There lay a circlet of jewels fit to crown the brow of magical Mongolia, the land of Yenghis Khan and the Golden Horde; turquoise, emerald, sapphire and ruby, all in a frame of brightest golden and copper hills, burnished by the red sunset. With a rush, we plunged down to the lake; a sheet of water, whose colour can only be compared to the milky blue of a turquoise, shot with clear-green chryso-phrease. It was boundless as the ocean. There had been a heavy storm the day before and huge breakers were still rolling up the beach. On the emerald grass beyond the line of the surf, our white felt yurta had been pitched; our boat was lying in the lagoon, which was divided from the lake by a strip of ruddy sand. Curiously enough, the water of this lagoon, a mile or more wide and stretching along the shore as far as the eye could see, was dark sapphire blue and as clear as crystal, whereas the lake was softly opalescent. In some



places only three feet of sand divided the two waters. Embracing the whole scene, except where the rocky hills approached the shore, and shooting long tongues into the water of the lagoon, lay vast fields of yellow cane, its feathery tops waving ten feet or more above the water. White swans in flocks and pairs were sailing peacefully about the lagoon and in and out among the islands of cane. The water of the lake proved to be sweet and cold; but we were told that in some parts of Lake Balkhash the water is brackish.

Tundus Bek said they had not seen anyone since leaving the works but that wild pigs and fish were plentiful. Even their hunger had not overcome their good Mohammedan loathing of pork, but as soon as we produced some fishing tackle, a good supper of fresh fish and fried wild onions was sizzling on the open fire. This and bursaks and tea remained our staple diet while we were at the lake. Zakir Bek told us that, when they arrived, the hills had been carpeted with wild yellow tulips, and wild rhubarb was still plentiful.

"And now, 'Tundus Bek,' we cried next morning, "show us those pigs."

"Heaven forbid, Bai, it is a great sin to touch, even to chase a pig; but I will follow you if you wish to go."

Old Tundus Bek had been a notorious horse-thief in his young days, for, to purchase a good



TUNDUS BEK DRINKING TEA WITH HIS COMPANIONS



wife, a Kirghiz must pay many horses, and to steal them is the easiest way. Such horse-thieves dress all in white (as an emblem of the shining innocence of their character, we say, but the Kirghiz say, because the white colour escapes notice on the shimmering Steppe), and many an eye is closed to the escapades of these white-clad, would-be bridegrooms; for the world long ago decided to forgive many sins to the lover.

So Tundus Bek buckled on the ancient sword, which he always wore, when guarding our horses, and we trotted away, along the edge of the canebrakes, in search of pigs. The old man's eyes glistened with a sportsman's ardour at every rustle in the cane. White gulls were screaming overhead, and invisible birds, frogs, bullfrogs and insects without number were sending up a chorus of whistling, croaking, singing and booming cries from the heart of the canebrake; but, suddenly, our ears caught the sound of squeaks and grunts and, as we rounded a hill, we saw a dozen big black pigs making for the reeds as fast as their twinkling trotters could carry them. We belaboured our ponies' sides with our heels and madly flapped our arms, in true Kirghiz fashion, as we started the pursuit. Tundus Bek followed us against his conscience, but much according to his sportsman's heart, and we thundered after the herd until it vanished into cover. One sow and a litter of half-grown young ones were left behind.

As the last one of her brood was darting into the cane, one of us stooped down and caught it up on to his saddle bow by the hind leg. This was the signal for a general stampede of the horses, and we raced into camp, with Tundus Bek waving his sword above his head.

Alas! for the old man! As we reached camp, the lively youngster leaped clear of the saddle, the horses gave a final plunge, the rider lost his grip on that convulsive hind leg, and away went the squealing pig on a straight dash for the cane. This was too much for Tundus Bek. He flourished his sword, flapped his arms and tore after the fugitive. As he overtook the accursed pork-to-be, he plunged that sacred sword-blade into its very heart, amidst the derisive jeers of his young companions. Poor pious Tundus Bek! How crest-fallen the old man was when he realized the enormity of his sin! It was days before the jest died out and the old man regained his self-respect. We could often see him spread his coat upon the lake shore and pray and prostrate himself again and again. May Allah have heard your prayers, good, gentle Tundus Bek!

One morning, we were awakened by a distant muffled shuffling, preceded by the patter of a thousand tiny hoofs. We looked along the road and saw a dappled herd of cattle approaching, preceded by a black-and-white checkered flock of sheep and goats. Heading the herd, plodded six

black yaks, and alongside and around it, rode half a dozen horsemen, sitting high in silver-mounted saddles, wearing black sheepskin hats upon their heads. Our men rushed to greet them.

"Salaam Allaikum! Kaida bourassin?" (Where are you going?)

"To Akmoli we are going."

"Whence have you come?"

"We are Sarts from Tashkend."

"Maljan aman bar?" (Are your families well?)

"Aman, aman." (They are well.)

"Was the grazing good on the way?"

"Very bad."

"Did you see any tigers?"

"Yes; one sprang at our herd at the south end of the lake."

"Will you sell us a sheep?"

"Yes, and a yak too. They are dying from the heat."

We were glad of the chance to vary our diet of fish with a little boiled mutton, but we declined the yak. We felt very sorry for the beautiful shaggy creatures plodding so patiently over the burning plain and pining for their snowy mountains, but we did not fancy them as food.

Yet, though we bought the sheep (for an exorbitant price, O crafty Oriental!) our plans for a meal of mutton were foiled by the sudden, passionate attachment which our prospective supper conceived for Tundus Bek. It pattered after him

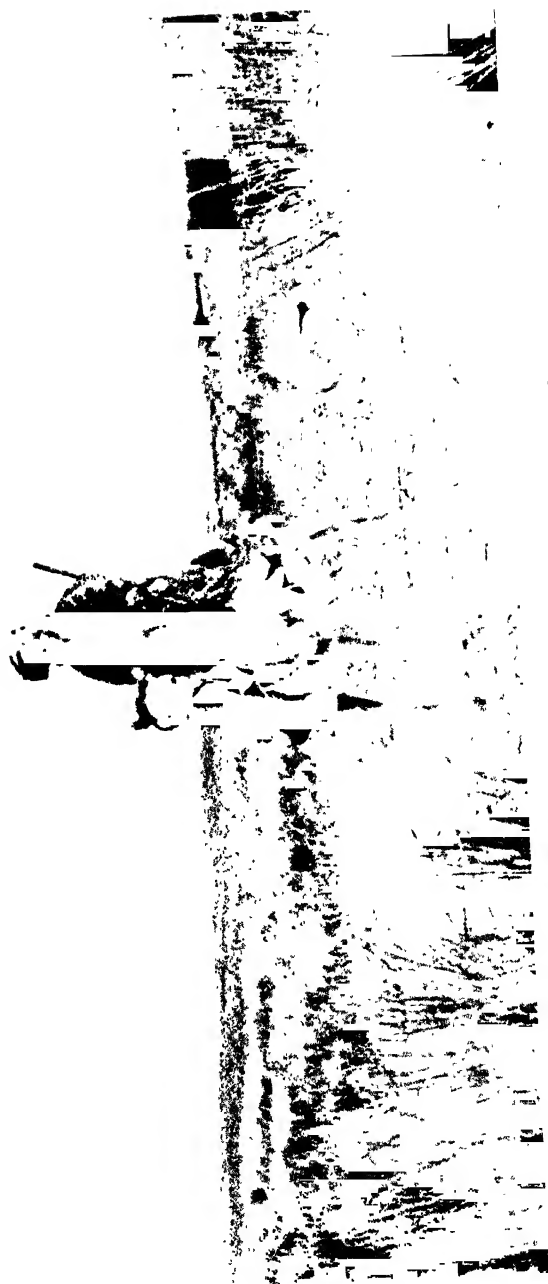
wherever he went, into the yurta, among the wagons and horses; it stayed by his side as he rode off and watched our horses; it betrayed the most piteous alarm, if it lost sight of him for a moment, as if it realized that only the old man stood between its life and the cooking-cauldron. The affection of the sheep was so touching, that it was not until the third day that our hunger overcame our sentiment. A pack of hungry wolves sang the funeral chant of the unhappy creature that night.

One morning, apparently from nowhere, as Kirghiz come, an old, very old, solitary horseman ambled up on a broken-down white pony. By his turban and his white clothes we recognized him as a Mullah. He was bent with age, and a long white beard hid a goodly portion of his rags. He was evidently a son of the Hungry Steppe for his face and hands were emaciated and dry. He had never seen Europeans before. We never found out where he came from, nor how he lived. He was eager for our bursaks and consented to slide down from his horse and totter into our yurta. His legs were so bent with a lifetime in the saddle, that his feet turned inward, almost at right angles.

"Aman! Kaida bourassin?" he asked us.

"Aoolga bouramin." (We are going to our home.) It is always the easiest answer. A grunt, and then another question followed:

"Bilmamen," (We do not understand) we replied.



## ON THE SHORES OF LAKE BALKHASH

IN THE SHORES OF LAKE BARRER  
 Dr. Johnston was recognized him as a mullah





He politely repeated his question.

"Bilmamen," we said again. "Noorman, tell the old gentleman that we do not understand him."

The old Mullah's eyes would have grown as round as saucers, had his cheeks not been shrivelled by eighty years of sun and wind and cold.

"How do you mean, you do not understand? Of course you understand! Am I not speaking to you in plain Kirghiz?"

Noorman explained to him that we were mad foreigners from a country where Kirghiz is not spoken. The old man understood nothing of all this, but rose up, thoroughly disgusted, and started out of the yurta.

"Noorman! Tell him to stop. We will give him tea. Aksha boolada," (there will be money). Oh, magic words! The Mullah folded his disjointed legs under him, and sat down on the rug of our yurta. Noorman soon brought in the samovar, and, as the old man sucked his tea from his saucer, one of our party produced a box of paints and a sketch-book. In ten minutes, the Mullah's likeness was transferred, so it seemed, from the paint-box to the paper.

"Oi! Boi! Oi! Shaitan bar!" (the devil is in it) murmured our young drivers, watching the process over the artistic shoulder. They touched the paint-box gingerly with the tips of their fingers, no doubt expecting to see Shaitan, the Devil, leap out of the box.

The old man's interest was awakened, he asked to see the picture. The result was instantaneous and unfortunate. He pulled his wobbly limbs together and tottered out of the yurta with every expression of anger and fear on his face, praying frantically, as we could tell, for every other word which he uttered was "Allah."

Noorman smiled indulgently. "He is a Mullah," he explained, "a very wild man. He has never seen foreigners or even Russians before. It is a great sin, with us, to draw the form or features of a man, but we know you and have learned not to care."

Nothing we could do would appease the old man. He climbed on to his pony's back and urged it to a walk.

"Trata," we cried, "Wait! Here is something for you! Aksha bar!" and we handed him a three-rouble bill.

The Mullah took the bit of paper, looked at it, and dropped it on the ground.

"Tell him it is money, Noorman," we cried, in despair at being so misunderstood. This was the last straw. Money indeed! As if the old man did not know what money looked like! This was paper! He rode away, and Noorman smiled again. He was our last visitor at Lake Balkhash.

Our three weeks were nearly over. Our provisions were exhausted; our duties were calling us. One morning we sadly prepared for depar-

ture. Our yurta was folded, our boat was drawn up out of the water, our horses were caught and harnessed. Once more the three vociferous wagons started on their journey across the silent Steppe. We mounted our horses, fat and strong after the good pastures of the lake shore. The chestnuts ran away, the piebalds ran away, the harness broke as usual in several places, the bells clashed. The turquoise lake was left to the swans and gulls once more, the red hills faded into the distance, and before noon we had settled down to our five-days jog home. The June sun baked us as if we had been flies upon the clay; the very bells sounded thirsty and hoarse and stopped their clamour every minute, to choke down a note, as a hot dog stops his panting to swallow.

In our thoughts, we were still on the shores of the lake which we were leaving forever; fishing off red crags with the surf at our feet, stalking swans across the lagoon in our boat for a nearer sight of their stately beauty, racing after wild boars along the edge of the canebrake, hearing the seagulls laugh at us, as they circled overhead, jeering because they could sail forever over that jewel of the Steppe, while we should never see it again. We felt as if each second were putting a wider and wider barrier between us and our glimpse of that beautiful unknown water, but we were wrong; the memory of Balkhash is still as bright in our hearts as the colours of the lake itself.

## THE MANNIKIN.

ON the evening of the fifteenth of January, 1905, Harter, our chief mining engineer, and I were sitting on a small dump of low-grade ore, near the top of the Sacred Hill, a rocky eminence which was one of the outcrops of the great vein of the Assumption Mine. We were gloomy, almost sulky, ready to curse Fate and each other. Every man who has worked in lonely isolation in foreign lands knows how hateful life seems to him at times. Its beauty and interest alike fail to charm, and he seems to his own disordered fancy to have been singled out amongst men to endure a life of unchanging solitude and unceasing hardships. However strong his heart may be, there are times when homesickness conquers his soul and his pride of life, and he longs for nothing except an end to it all. I suppose that we were suffering from an acute attack of the disease, for we were feeling very lonely.

There was, indeed, nothing in our surroundings to induce gaiety. The sky was overcast with clouds, lustreless, formless, heavy with impending snow. The landscape was caught fast in the grip

of winter. The ground had been covered with snow for three or four months and the tireless winds had swept all the beauty out of it; the rocks were bare, and it lay in glazed sheets wherever a little protection gave it a resting-place, and in unsightly piles against the buildings around the mine, covered with soot and cinders from the blacksmith's shop. The smoke of the boiler-house was pouring horizontally from the stack and was hastily hurrying southward in a long dark streak to the mountains of Kisil Tav. It seemed glad to escape from the chilly atmosphere of the mine, and I think that, in our hearts, we were wishing that we, too, could escape from such a cheerless scene. Our moods were in tune with the weather, for we had had a depressing day. We had been examining the records of the drilling which we had been carrying out under the Sacred Hill. To the native Kirghiz this was a hill of peculiar sanctity. All hills are surrounded with a halo of sanctity in the Mahommedan scheme of thought; but this particular hill was not like other hills; here was the outcrop of the mysterious vein, and over it mysterious pale fires glowed at night, according to the Kirghiz legend. It was curious to meet this idea in this far-away land, amongst a people who were not by instinct miners. It is a well-known belief of the "cousin Jacks" in Cornwall that Will-o'-the-wisp lights play over the outcrops of mineral veins. Perhaps the same

Phoenicians who used to come to Cornwall to mine tin had also travelled eastward and carried the same wonder-stories to the Steppes. Anyhow the diamond drills had failed to justify the hopes which the Sacred Hill and its Will-o'-the-wisp legends had raised in our hearts.

Harter was the first to speak: "I am sick of these barren hills and of the wind which never stops, and of the winter which grips you and never lets go. I am sick of boiled mutton and the smell of tallow and of weak tea and of grit in my bread. I am sick of pulling my furs on and off twenty times a day and of feeling that it is my duty to be cheerful when there is nothing to be cheerful about. I am sick of drilling in barren rock and never finding anything."

"The fact is, Harter," I said, "you pointed that last hole wrong."

"I may have pointed the hole wrong, but, if I had not, this wind would still be freezing me to the bone. Let us go to the house; I am stiff with cold."

Darkness was falling as we left the protection of the Sacred Hill. We picked our path around the slippery edge of the open cut, a huge excavation made in the dim past by unknown hands, in their search for the rich nodules of the precious copper, when copper was to them what iron is to us, their visible sign of progress on the scale of human endeavour. It was quite dark when we

reached the street, which was lined with workmen's houses. The windows were glowing with cheerful light and behind them we could see families gathered around the samovar, happy and contented. They had made the weary trip, fifteen hundred miles long, from Little Russia, by train where they could and when they had money to pay for the ride, and by wagon and on foot when they had not. Here, in this lonely corner of the earth, they had found the haven of their desires and were perfectly happy. Poor souls, it seemed a paradise to them! They asked so little of life! Bread and a little tea and sugar, a warm house and an occasional spree on holidays. As the mine apothecary said to me one day, "Here we have found everything we want; we are perfectly happy." He was receiving seventeen dollars a month.

Reaching home we, too, were glad of the warmth and the hot tea, though I am afraid that our consumption of sugar would have shocked the frugal soul of the apothecary. He takes a lump of sugar from his pocket, nibbles off a small morsel, which he holds between his teeth, and sips his tea through it. In this way his palate is slightly tickled from time to time with the taste of sweetness and he is happy. After nibbling off as many fragments as he drinks cups of tea, he returns the lump to his pocket, where it is ready for the next time. The reader, who may be gentle, but is



certainly extravagant, will hardly believe how long a pound of sugar will last under such treatment.

I suggested to Harter that we should go to the smelting works the next day, a drive of seventy miles. We had four relays of horses at the relay stations and, although I knew that the weather was bad, I thought that we could make the trip. The starosta was more doubtful. "Tomorrow, Your Honour, the bouràn will be blowing, and men lose their way and their lives, too, at such times."

"Well, starosta," I said, "we will try it; we live in the hands of God (pree Bogom jiviom); we have four good men and fifteen good horses and I think that we can do it."

"Well, I will see that everything is ready by daylight," said the starosta; and he vanished through the heavy felt-lined doors into the darkness.

Next morning, the outlook was not inviting. The wind was blowing fiercely and had veered into the northwest, the home and origin of the bouràn. The village street had been swept bare of snow which lay banked up against our windows. The air was full of swirling icy particles which obliterated all outlines and produced the impression that you were part of the storm and were being swept through space on a storm cloud.

The felt doors flew open and Djumabek, our driver, blew in in a gust of snow. He was a strange-

looking sight. He was so wrapped in furs and belted and buckled that he had almost lost the power of motion; the long sleeves of his wadded coat dangled to his knees; his head was encased in his malachai, so that only his shining red nose and black eyebrows and mustache were visible, and these were encrusted with icicles; he wore three pair of boots, which made his legs so stiff that he could scarcely waddle.

"Djermàn," he said, "bouràn djermàn." We only had to look outside to see that the storm was bad, but we had such implicit confidence in Djumabek, Abdrachman, Tocsan and Ecubas that I, for my part, would have cheerfully followed them, if they had said that they were going to the North Pole.

We began to dress ourselves. We drew on our shoes, three pair of them; first a loose pair of thin embroidered leather boots (with moccasin soles), then felt boots (peemies) of solid wool about one inch thick, and then stout leather boots, all coming well over the knee; next, a short overcoat to the knee, lined with curly-wool sheepskin; then the dachá, a huge overcoat of horse-skin outside and fox-skin inside, coming to the ground, with a collar which, when turned up, reached to the top of one's head and so voluminous that it could be wrapped nearly twice round one's body. Then with a huge wolf-skin rug, we were ready.

Outside was the sleigh, full of snow, with Ab-

drachman sitting on the box, and Tocsan and Ecubas each riding one of the chestnuts with one of them leading the third. Harnessed to the sleighs were our three beautiful "pyegankas" or piebalds, probably the best and certainly the prettiest troika within five hundred miles. The men were keeping up a continuous stream of chatter, as Kirghiz do, amongst themselves, but there was no sign that they were about to start on a seventy-mile ride across the trackless Steppe in the midst of a furious blizzard. One of them said "Djermàn," but that was all; you might have thought that we were commuters taking the 8.03 A. M. train from Black Harbor to New York. It might seem to be an adventure to us, but to them, it all seemed to be the natural and obvious thing to do. The wind was very strong and until you are used to it it strangles you and makes you gasp. A few friends and Kirghiz stable-boys had gathered to watch us start; they were standing idly, apparently indifferent to the storm and, while they seemed to be personally concerned to see us leave them, they showed no sign of concern about our safety, nor did they seem to look upon us as heroes in the least. It is always a little disappointing when you find that your heroism is only plain to your own vision. If the situation had been changed to the top of the stairs leading to the train platforms at the 42nd Street Subway station at New York, and these amiable nomads had been

saying goodbye to *us*, in anticipation of *their* struggle to reach Wall Street at nine o'clock in the morning, it is probable that they would have felt the glow of heroism in their hearts, while we would have remained calmly indifferent. It is seldom possible that we can be heroes to our companions.

We immediately saw that our sensation of heroism was quite misplaced and, swallowing our disappointment and the wind which seemed to choke us, we, too, assumed, as well as we could, an air of indifference. "How nice and comfortable your sleigh is," said the apothecary; "you will be as warm as toast in here." The sleigh consisted of the usual large basket about six feet long and four wide, covered on the outside with heavy leather. At the back is a leather hood, at the front end a board is placed across the basket, which covers your feet and affords a seat for the driver and, possibly, for an extra man. A heavy leather apron stretches from the seat to the top of the hood so that the traveller can enclose his portion of the sleigh, if he wish. The drivers have no protection whatever, nor do they seem to expect it nor notice its absence. They obey what is, apparently, a law of nature, which is that some men are always in front of the shield and some men are always behind it. For my part, I found some difficulty, that day, in enduring life behind the shield, and I do not think that I could have borne it for an hour in front. But the hardy endurance of those

Kirghiz is astonishing. On one occasion, this same Abdrachman sat on this same wooden seat throughout a whole trip from the smelting works to Petropavlovsk in the dead of winter; one hundred and twenty hours without rest. At the change of horses, he was busy with the horses and helping us with our food; when he ate, I do not know; I think that he took very little of anything except an occasional glass of hot tea. For five days and nights he sat upright on this bare board.

In spite of what the apothecary had said, the sleigh had not the appearance of warmth to us, when we looked inside; it was a confused mass of hay and pillows and snow; but we said it had, and everyone else thought it had, and our friends tucked the wolf-skin around our feet, and, with a final "prostchai," buckled the apron to the hood. "Aidà!" said the driver, and the horses leapt into their collars. The sleigh gave a lurch which threw Harter's massive form on top of me, from which I was only relieved by another lurch which threw me on top of him. The Russian sleigh is mounted on two runners placed closely together under the centre of the body; this invitation to upset is counteracted by a species of outrigger on each side, which receives the weight of the sleigh when it tips too far to one side or the other. By this contrivance, you have the constant excitement of starting an upset without the inconvenience of ever completing one. As you incline, perhaps

fifteen degrees on each side, before finding an outrigger, you are exposed to a total roll of about thirty degrees, which adds a pleasing and constantly repeated excitement to the drive. It becomes annoying when you travel with a man like Harter, for he was a much heavier man than I, and when the sleigh rolled on to the outrigger on my side, he gained six inches of space; but when the sleigh rolled back to his side, I only recovered three inches. Even old and tried friendships are not made to endure tests of such a kind.

Like a ship at sea, you are not only exposed to this sideways roll, but also to the fore-and-aft pitching, in and out of the ookhabs or pits which are worn in a much frequented snow road. Such pits will be twenty or twenty-five feet apart, and may succeed each other continuously for a short distance or for a mile or more. Out of these two forces, acting on each other at right angles, you can enjoy an extraordinary and irritating variety of plunging effects, none of which ever seems to be identically repeated.

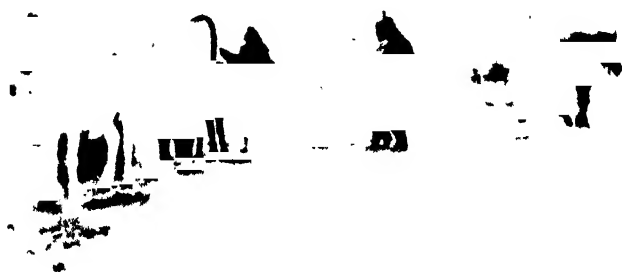
In the meantime, Djumabek and Abdrachman are sitting outside on their narrow board, unconscious of outriggers or ookhabs, and Tocsan and Ecubas are trotting alongside on the chestnuts, also without any concern.

We were travelling fast, and the houses of the village seemed to suddenly emerge from the blinding mist and suddenly disappear. I partially

recognized the store and the powder-house and I thought that I recognized the movement of the sleigh as we rounded the foot of the Yuspenssky hill and turned northward toward the smelting works; but, after that, I saw nothing, felt nothing, except the lurching swing of the sleigh. Sky and earth were welded by the blinding snow into one. The effect, after a time, is bewildering. The three dimensions lose their identities and you seem to be moving along all three simultaneously. If you are travelling on a windless night, when the mist is glowing like luminous vapour in the moonlight, the landscape becomes crowded with fantastic and bewildering illusions. You are no longer gliding on the ground but are floating through the air on the sound of the sleigh-bells, and you are soothed with a series of fantastic visions which are extraordinarily vivid and insistent; mountains appear and disappear; houses are sighted in the far distance, they quickly come nearer and nearer and suddenly change into small birch trees and rush swiftly by; a huge cliff rises at your side and you are driving along a road cut into the side of the rock, on the other side you are looking down at a stream of water bubbling over the boulders thirty feet below you; you rub your eyes, but the vision persists and does not yield until it is replaced by another equally fantastic. But, on a windy day, when the snow is beating your face to blood, you have no time for such pleasant illu-



WINTER TRAVEL ON THE STEPPES







sions, and are conscious only of the stern fight which you are waging with nature. When the veil is lifted for an instant, a bush suddenly starts out of the ground in front of you, swells rapidly to an enormous size, hits you in the face, throws a handful of snow down your neck and immediately shrinks again to nothing. The clouds strike you with invisible hands and the icy spray spits viciously in your face. You have no strength left for any thoughts except for the battle with the storm. How the drivers and riders kept to the allotted track or anywhere near it, I do not know. "Can you see the road?" I asked occasionally, and the reply always came, "We can." Occasionally I saw it too, or rather felt it—as the runners of the sleigh ground on its stony surface, where it had been swept bare by the wind.

Our progress was slow, for the wind had swept the snow into ridges into which the sleigh plunged as into deep loose sand, and through which the piebalds had to pull it by sheer force. It takes good horses and good men for work of this kind. I only once identified our location, when we slid down the banks on to the black icy surface of the river Sara-Su. It took about four hours to cover the stage to Bulkuldak, a distance of twenty miles. It was hardly possible to distinguish the house, half buried in the side of the hill and wholly buried in snow; but a little smoke and a strong smell of burning dung proclaimed the life within.

The men were soon busy with the change of horses. I asked them whether the storm was too heavy for them and if they felt sure that they could follow the road; they seemed to feel the question as irrelevant and I said nothing more.

The second stage to the Daria was like the first, except that each rider was now leading two horses. The road lay parallel to and near the foot of a high rocky ridge of mountains, but no mountains were visible today. It was afternoon when we reached the Daria. We had been in the sleighs for about eight hours and were suffering from cold. It is a cruel form of torture. When we arrived at the Daria, the delicious perfume of the smoke was too entrancing and we jumped out of the sleigh and all groped our way down the snow passage to the outer room, and stumbled in the darkness over the goats and sheep and camels till we found the door of the living-room. The atmosphere of the room contained everything that an atmosphere ought not to have and nothing that it should have; but it was warm and it all seemed like an enchanted palace to us. We had sent forward Akin to this point on the day before and he had prepared the samovar and we drank the hot weak tea until our hands and feet returned to life.

When we left the Daria the chestnuts were harnessed to the sleigh, and three men with twelve led horses were trotting alongside. The road was

exceedingly heavy and the light chestnut troika had hard work to pull our sleigh through the fresh snowdrifts. Happily the wind was moderating and the cold was more endurable, or we thought it was, for the effect of hot tea is magical for a few hours. As we came within five miles of the Noura station, the road wound around some hills and the wind was partly cut off by them and was partly behind us. The effect of the change was instantaneous; we lowered the apron of our carriage, the men began to chatter on the box and the riders began to chatter too; the road was good now and we slipped along the frozen trail at a twelve-mile gallop. The three drivers were driving the twelve loose horses ahead of them. They seemed to have perfect control of them; it was a pretty sight. I have seen horsemen North, South, East and West, but I have never seen men who have such easy and complete control of horses as the Kirghiz. They are not showy riders nor graceful ones, but they are one with the horse and they bring up the horse from its babyhood to be one with them. As we drew near the Noura station, they all began to shout and laugh, the horses seemed to catch the spirit of the moment and we all galloped up to the station in high spirits. Djumabek said to me, "It is now quite dark and we fear that we cannot find the road; we think that we must stay here for the night." I knew this was his way of saying that he wanted some boiled mutton,

but I agreed with him that it was dark and that we had better remain where we were till day.

So we all plunged down the snow tunnel into the house, we and our five men and sixteen horses, helter-skelter, who could get there first. The outside room was already full of horses and camels and, of course, quite dark; but someone heard the noise and, in the distance, a door creaked and opened and a glimmer of light could be seen and much smoke could be felt. "Aman, Aman, Bai," a man called as we stumbled over goats and sheep and bumped our heads against the poles and twigs of the low roof. We joined the circle of teamsters inside who were sitting round the fire which was furnishing both light and heat. We took off our heavy clothes and our outer boots and joined the circle. Karagand was heaped on the blaze and the smoke and the smell of the animals in the adjoining room was stifling. But everybody seemed quite comfortable except ourselves and, at least, we were sheltered from the cold outside. After our men had attended to the animals, they brought in our basket of provisions; they formed a circle around Harter and me and watched us eat our strange-looking food. They would have none of it, but patiently chattered until we had finished our unnatural and entirely inadequate meal. Then we had tea; and, with the hot tea and the stifling air, our brains began to swim and I wished that we had insisted on pushing on to

the works. But everyone seemed so happy and light-hearted that we made a great effort to control our feelings and we agreed with our driver Djumabek that a great occasion like this should certainly be celebrated with boiled mutton. So we handed five roubles to the keeper of the station, and we all went into the next room and selected a sheep which was, there and then, slaughtered and brought into the living-room. An hour was thus pleasantly spent in preparing the animal for the pot. The head was handed to me in its natural shape and a hole was made in the embers and they showed me how to place the horrible dainty morsel in the fire, so that it would be especially nicely cooked for me; and the smell of the burning wool filled the room with its pungent savour. If I have said enough to enable the gentle but extravagant reader to form a true picture of this scene, I will not further describe its horrible details. When all was ready, we sat around the steaming platter; the head was given to me as a great delicacy, and the cheerful chatter of the Kirghiz was partly silenced for a while. The last morsel was eaten, the last bone was cracked and devoured and we sat around the mat, again drinking tea. Djumabek was whittling at some wooden fragments and Abdrachman was doing some queer things with some uneatable portions of the sheep which are usually hidden from view. Finally, these articles were all combined and turned them-

selves into a mannikin, suspended by a string, which Abdrachman had manufactured of the guts of the animal, from an elastic pole on the roof. The whole was so arranged that, when the pole was gently agitated, the little mannikin danced and played ridiculous antics on a low table which was brought in and arranged as a stage for him. For hours the little man danced, nor ever wearied, and he was much applauded. These wild rough men seemed to take him to their hearts for the fun which he gave them. The harder he danced, the more pleased were they all. It was all very human and a little pathetic. I still have the merry little mannikin, who lies tied up in his original string of gut in a drawer in my desk; and, whenever I see the stupid little toy, I think of how he danced in the lonely snow hut in the Steppes, and how a dozen men sat round in a circle and watched his funny antics for hours with delight, and forgot the cold of the day which was past and of the day which was to come. In one sense these men have solved the secret of life, for they seek and know happiness only in the joy of living; the struggle which they know is the eternal struggle with nature but not the unnatural struggle with each other.

I collapsed with the heat and fatigue and went to sleep while the mannikin was still dancing.

Next morning the air was still and very cold, and we drove home without incident. During the

next few days, the teamsters arrived at the works with their noses and cheeks scarred with frost bites. Two men were said to have lost their lives in the blizzard. It is always hard to confirm such rumours in the Steppes. Life, there, is so very incidental.



## A HUNT WITH EAGLES.

TO tell a hunting story, it is necessary to face a doubting audience, for there is an undying belief that the memory of a huntsman is defective; some say that all huntsmen are liars. For years I have told the story of fox-hunting in Florida; how, at the end of the chase, the weary fox climbs a pine tree; how the huntsman climbs the tree after him and how he grasps the fox behind the neck and, so, brings him down to earth. I have told this story very often in an experimental way, vaguely wondering when I should find someone who would accept it with cheerful acquiescence; but I have never known it to be received with any comment other than, "foxes do not climb pine trees." Is it possible to hope for credence when I tell how the Kirghiz catch wolves with eagles?

Although our relations with Adam Bai had been strained by the unfortunate incident of the disappearance of the three-rouble bill up the sleeve of the old gentleman, when we were borrowing twenty thousand roubles from him, yet the old man was such a good sport that he duly kept his promise, made in happier days, to invite us to

join him in an eagle hunt, and on a certain chilly morning in October two men rode up to our village and, with much ceremony, delivered a message to this effect: that Adam Bai hoped to take the eagles for their first hunt of the season on the following day, and that he begged us to share the sport with him and to join him at his zimofka or winter quarters on the Kisil Tav mountains without delay.

Now, it is one thing to visit the Kirghiz in their tents, with the glory of the summer sky above them and the flower-strewn earth around them; when the herds are fat and sleek, when the girls are busy with the lambs and kids and the boys are filled up every day with all the koomiss that they can drink; but it is quite another thing to visit them in their detestable winter zimofkas, when the young men are out on the Steppes all night herding their flocks and stock in the bitter wind, and the women and children and old men are moping and groping in the darkness and filth of the miserable hut. But the prospect of an eagle hunt was irresistible and we saddled our horses and followed our guides.

Before the Russians absorbed their country, the Kirghiz usually spent the winter as well as the summer in their tents; but, having tested under Russian example the warmth of wall and roof, they gradually adopted them for their own use in winter. As they are not artisans by instinct, they

made a very poor show when they attempted to follow the Russian style; and their conservatism is ample proof against any desire for change. They present an unruffled face to Fate, meet Life as it is and seek neither to hasten nor retard Death as it shall be. Rich and poor alike, each man is absolutely contented with his lot. Out of their passionate adoration of nature has been born the spirit which keeps them in unison with it; from it they learn to live and die like the flowers and animals which they see around them; they are strangers to all the restless desires and emotions, which the West considers to be the especial attributes of humanity.

At any rate, there is no display of any restless desires or emotions about their domestic architecture. The form of the zimofka is always the same. It is usually built where there is good drainage. A hole is dug in the ground of the desired size to a depth of about four feet. This hole is about fifty or sixty feet square. The walls are built of sun-dried brick from the floor of the hole to a height of about four feet above the ground. A small corner of the enclosure is partitioned off by a mud-brick wall, and this forms the one and only room for the use of the very numerous human beings who may occupy it for the winter. One tiny window admits a pale light during the brief hours of winter daylight. The rest of the enclosure is devoted to the use of the domestic fauna, from



TAUKE

Looking very pretty in her fur cap



which the family is inseparable. Over the whole, as a roof, flat poles are laid, supported in forked props; on the poles, karagand brush is scattered and the top covering is of hay. Nature then completes the work in due season by burying the whole under a heavy mantle of snow. Ingress is had through a tunnel-like aperture, made of poles and brush, to protect the main door from the snow. This door opens into the animal-room, through which you must pass to gain the living-room. The interior has no finish of any kind; the mud walls are left bare; the floor is the natural soil; the furniture consists of an iron pan in which the clothes are sometimes boiled, and a samovar. Sometimes there is a pretence of a chimney, sometimes none. Coverings of a kind are spread on a portion of the mud floor, but, in the zimofka, the women use their old rough carpets and do not display the beautiful rugs and hangings with which they decorate their summer tents. There is no ventilation of any kind except during the rare intervals when the door is opened into the animal-room, and then the quality of air admitted is not of the choicest. From the moment when they occupy it on October 1st to the moment when they leave it on May 1st not the slightest attempt is made to clean it or to remove any refuse. Anything which is brought into a zimofka must either walk out on its own legs, or be eaten, or stay there until the following Spring.

When Spring comes, the inmates of the zimofka are reminded of it by the snow and rain which drip through the brushwood roof, and no discomfort can be imagined worse than the discomfort of a zimofka at such a time. When the inmates finally move into their tents, their animals eat the hay of the roofs, the karagand is burned for fuel and the poles and the window are removed and saved for next year in some secret place. The house is thus left open to the sky and the four winds, and the crows and buzzards take possession and give it the only cleaning it ever receives.

In such conditions is the family and patriarchal life maintained. Men and women pass seventwelfths of their lives in them; children are born; old people die; in them are cherished gentle, kindly thoughts which breed a race with a soul like a child and from which has sprung a large part, at least, of the great ideas which have swayed the world. Surely, however, the ideas were born in the tents under the stars and not within the stifling walls of a zimofka, and it remains to be seen how long the race can retain its character under its changed conditions.

When we rode out of our village, the day was cold and gray and a chilly wind was chasing the first flying snowflakes across the frozen Steppe, whirling them through the yellow grass blades and the bare twigs of the karagand bushes. The Kisil Tav mountains are rocky and barren and our

horses' feet rang sharply as we scrambled over the rugged rocks. Adam Bai's zimofka had not yet put on its winter coat and stood out in its ugly nakedness. On the hay roof (which was being rapidly scattered by the wind) were collected all the family possessions not needed during the winter, a ramshackle carriage, some harness, some tents and other odds and ends. We led our horses down the tunnel entry to the first or animal-room and then groped our way to the living-room and entered.

There were about a dozen people inside. Old Adam Bai himself, some young men, several girls and the dowager wife, now relegated to an exclusive but somewhat dirty seat of honour. A small kerosene lamp (for Adam Bai was a rich man) furnished more smoke than light, and we slightly helped the situation by lighting two candles which we had brought with us. Not the warmest admirer of the Kirghiz can say that they are adapted to life within four walls; their natures and manners shrivel under limitations which are unnatural to them; they mope and pine until Spring opens their cage, when they flit into the sunlight and become themselves again.

In the corner of the room glowed the eyes of two eagles, seated on their perches.

When the time arrived for sleep, the men lay down at one end of the room and the women at the other, a curtain being drawn between them.



Every few hours during the long night, Adam Bai would rise to his knees and sing long prayers in a loud voice, bowing his forehead to the ground at every reference to the One and One Only God. At intervals, some of the young men rose, drew on their boots and heavy clothes and went out; others came in, covered with snow and ice. These were the stock guards who relieved each other in watches. Their duty was to protect the sheep from wolves and to keep the stock in sheltered spots on stormy nights. It was not a light task, and the worse the storm, the more carefully must they keep their watch. The horses can take care of themselves, but the cattle and sheep are helpless animals and must be carefully guarded.

We awoke as the first dim rays of light filtered through the solitary window and saw Adam Bai sitting on a pile of cushions, gazing earnestly through the brushwood smoke at his priceless bird. It was sitting on its perch in the corner, ruffled and fierce, motionless yet alert, its black eyes keenly following every movement of the Kirghiz coming and going in the room. During the warm weather its blood has been running sluggishly, but now it has felt the first touch of cold and it gives a restless cry, to which warning note it would be well for every living thing on the Steppe to give heed, from the fluffy owl to the bucking bighorn ram. The old man was gazing intently at his favourite bird and his face was interesting to study. It





would be easy to draw fantastic conclusions from such a study; but the only conclusion which I ever drew from a study of the Kirghiz mind, with any confidence in its correctness, was that neither our formulæ, nor our classifications, nor our language could be applied to it in any intelligent manner. It is not possible that we, who are compelled to struggle desperately for the necessities of life but do not value them at all unless they are accompanied by an immensely long list of superfluities, can have any conception of the minds of men who acquire the necessities without difficulty and who, having acquired these, ask for nothing more. The attitude of repose, which naturally follows such a conception of life, is entirely unintelligible to us. It is, therefore, likely that I was quite wrong in considering Adam Bai's face an interesting study, for it is very possible that he was thinking of nothing at all.

The door bursts open, "A fox! A fox!" cries a herdsman, tumbling breathless into the room, whip in hand, brown eyes alight under the furry brim of his malachai. The sleepy household awakes to instant life; first boots, then layer after layer of wadded clothes are pulled on, fur malachais are firmly tied around eager, smiling faces, and lastly, each shapeless form is girthed around the middle with a leather belt, from which dangle hunting-knives, bags and horns for powder and shot and all the paraphernalia of the primitive chase; all

seize their whips and rush out. Old Adam Bai remains serenely calm; he reaches for his ancient muzzle-loader with its forked rest and slings it across his back and then watches the huntsman to be sure that the eagle is properly handled, a task that is by no means a pastime for children. The huntsman pulls on a pair of heavy rawhide gloves and gently raises the eagle from its perch. The royal captive convulsively grips the gloved wrist and peers fiercely at the open door, but, when a leathern hood is deftly slipped over its eyes, it lapses into calm. One of Adam Bai's sons, Malik, a boy of about sixteen, with black eyes and very pink cheeks, has reached for the other, a young bird, now commencing its training. A well-trained eagle is worth the price of four horses on the Steppes. He is not only valuable for the sport he offers but for the money which he brings in to the patriarchal chest. In a good season, he may secure for his master two hundred roubles' worth of furs. So a promising young eagle receives a very careful education and the skill with which he is handled affects his value very much.

The men outside are busy with the horses which are always standing in plenty ready saddled about the entrance to any zimofka. Each man mounts a pony and belabours its shaggy sides with whip and heel until the frost flies; away go a dozen riders, each one eager to be the first at the scene of the chase. The huntsman is more deliberate;

his bird is heavy to handle, and it must not be excited lest it get out of hand; he mounts his pony and lays his burdened arm in the wooden crotch which is provided on the saddle bow to support it. Malik, too, mounts his horse with his eagle, and lastly comes Tauk, Adam Bai's fifteen-year-old daughter, looking very pretty in her bright velvet clothes and fur cap. When we are all mounted, we jog along behind the huntsman across a little meadow and mount at last, among rolling stones, to a small hilltop, from which point the surrounding country is visible down to the blue horizon.

While the ruck of riders goes circling across the plain, hoping to beat up the longed-for fox, our little group stands behind the huntsman with his great eagle and Malik with his smaller one, gazing eagerly over the endless expanse of karagand scrub below, straining our eyes to catch sight of the least moving speck among the waving grasses. The hoods are slipped from the eagles' eyes and the great birds of prey are all alert, sleek and strong and cruel, ready to fall upon the first living thing that meets their gaze.

Suddenly the young bird peers forward, raises its wings and sails away into the distance. For a moment it hangs hovering in the teeth of the wind and then—suddenly drops like a stone into the grass, from which rise, next moment, piercing screams and a whole cloud of creamy feathers. Malik claps his heels to his pony's sides and rushes

headlong down the hill, but reaches the eagle too late to rescue a huge fluffy owl from its clutches. The hapless bird of night is lying on its back in the grass, helplessly snapping at its foe; the eagle holds fast to its prey and glares resentfully at its approaching master. All the Kirghiz ride up to watch Malik extract his eagle's talons one by one from its victim's flesh. When the conqueror is once more hooded and placed on its perch on Malik's wrist, they ride away, first plucking out a handful or two of the downy feathers of the owl, wherewith to decorate the caps of Tauk and her friends.

Once more the huntsmen wait upon the hilltop, holding the unhooded eagles, while the beaters scour the plain.

And behold! A moving speck among the karagand! This time it is the turn of the old eagle which has seen it first. Already it has left its perch and is hanging high in the sky, poised above its prey. Whatever it is, it is crouching low among the bushes, until the final downward sweep of the death-dealing speck above it sends it scampering for its life. An anxious cry breaks from the Kirghiz; the quarry is a wolf, a dangerous foe even for an old and experienced eagle. Two miles from the hilltop the eagle drops. Its talons sink deep into the head of the flying wolf, and bird and beast roll in the grass together. With whirling whips and frantic kicks, the Kirghiz beat their ponies to the



TAUK AND HER BROTHER



YOUNG MALIK WITH HIS EAGLE





battlefield. When they arrive the wolf is almost overpowered; the eagle's beak is deeply imbedded in its brain, and, though minus a few feathers, the gallant victor is as indomitable as ever. The efforts of three men scarcely suffice to extricate its claws, so ruthlessly are they implanted in its victim.

An hour passes; the riders have dismounted and are resting their panting ponies; some squatting among the rocks telling long tales of aquiline exploits, others stripping the wolf of its precious pelt. The eagles are resting sleepily upon their perches; the sun has come out, the snow has begun to thaw; their blood is running sluggishly again.

"It is too hot to hunt now," says Adam Bai. "If Allah wills, we will catch that fox tomorrow; but now, aoolga beramin (I am going home)."

Gaily the riders troop zimofka-ward. The eagles have relapsed into torpor, but their masters chatter gaily as they hurry along, their mouths watering for the koomiss and boiled mutton, which they know are awaiting them.

## THE EAGLE'S SONG

As wakeful I crouch in the cold twilight  
Of a draughty yurt on an autumn night,  
I ruffle my wings and my heart beats strong  
I sing to myself this hunting song

Oi! Oi! Boi Yoi!  
The white hares fly:  
High in the sky  
    Poised I hang.  
Blow, blow, fierce wind!  
Fiercer am I:  
Shine, shine bright sun  
    In my bright eye.

I see my prey:  
I turn! I stop!  
I poise! I drop!  
    Beware Gray Wolf!  
    Ho! Ho!

While the children sprawl on the naked ground  
By the brushwood blaze, and the men sit round  
Watchful and sullen, I blink through the glare  
Of the smoky light, in the reeking air:  
And chained to my perch, in my heart I sing  
The wild hunting song of the great free King.

Mount high! Soar high!  
The foxes fly!  
In the bright sky  
    Poised I hang,

Whistle to me  
Wind of the plain!  
Free! I am free!  
Hunting again!

I see my prey,  
I swoop! I drop!  
Oh! When I stop,  
Bold Big-Horn Ram!  
Beware! Beware!  
Ho! Ho!

THE END



